

LONDON^{THE} READER

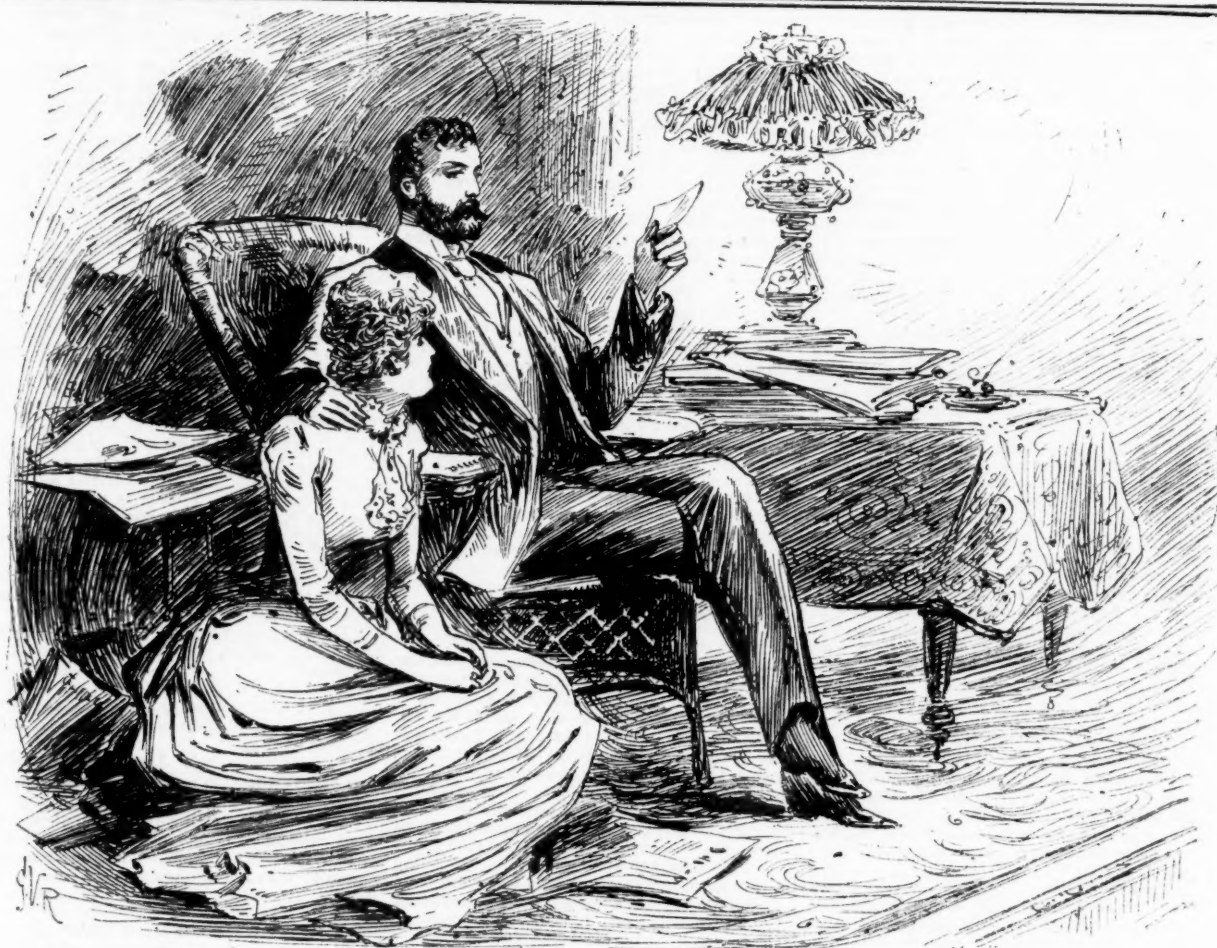
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["FIFTY POUNDS!" MUTTERED CLAUD TO HIMSELF, "IT IS WORTH TRYING FOR!"]

HILDRED ELSINORE.

CHAPTER I.

The ground floor of a house in the new part of Fulham; standing not along the good old omnibus route which seems to have been untouched by the hand of time, but in the labyrinth of streets and terraces which have sprung up like mushrooms on a district only twenty years ago given over to market gardeners. Just the two parlours with folding doors, so familiar to all those who have had to inhabit cheap apartments, where the invariable rule is for the front chamber to be a sitting-room, while the back is devoted to the hours of slumber.

No. 89, Delaporte-road had nothing whatever to distinguish it outwardly from the other houses on the same side of the way. They all had bay windows and venetian blinds, provided by the landlord; they were all reached by a flight of steps, and all, or most of them, let apartments.

No. 89 was at the select end of the road,

that is it faced the small enclosure round a large, red-brick church, and so was not only free from opposite neighbours, but could enjoy an uninterrupted view of the few stunted shrubs which tried to flourish in the said enclosure.

The half-dozen houses immediately opposite the church had also the advantage of always knowing the time, since a large clock had been presented to St. Ursula's by a generous parishioner.

Against these privileges must be reckoned that the bell of St. Ursula's sounded like a muffle-man's, and that the choir practices twice a week were hardly a musical treat; but, on the whole, Delaporte road considered St. Ursula's an honour to the neighbourhood, and plumed themselves on the odour of sanctity derived from a church in their midst.

Mrs. Robson, the landlady of No. 89, was a widow, and unlike the proverbial lodging-letting widow she never talked of "having seen better days."

Her husband had been a scamp, who made her life one long anxiety; and when her uncle left her a snug legacy, the first use Mr.

Robson made of the money was to drink himself to death. Happily this was such a short process, that he had not time to get through much of his wife's little property; and when she had buried him and paid all his debts—just or unjust—Mrs. Robson found herself possessed of a thousand pounds in hard cash.

Perhaps the idea of a home nothing could take from her was peculiarly attractive to a woman who, in her husband's time, had been continually driven out by lack of money to pay the rent, so Mrs. Robson bought No. 89, Delaporte-road—or rather the lease of it—for ninety-nine years. She furnished the house from top to toe; invested the remainder of the capital in railway stock paying six per cent., and then began to think how she could add to her income and educate her child, since thirty pounds a year was not sufficient to keep and clothe them.

The way was not hard to find. She was still a young woman, and an energetic one. Mrs. Robson let her ground floor to a series of "City gents," and took in a little dress-making. As she employed no assistants, and was a rapid worker, this paid well; and by

the time her daughter Nan was eighteen, Mrs. Robson had added considerably to her capital, and set up a little servant to do the roughest of the house-work and run errands.

The widow was much looked up to in Delaporte road—a locality where few people lived ten years in one house. The clergyman of St. Ursula's invoked her aid in sundry parish matters; his wife called once a quarter; the doctor always recommended his assistants to lodge at No. 89 if they could be received there. In short, so far from "having seen better days," these were probably the very best Mrs. Robson had ever known, and she would be quite satisfied if she never had to see worse.

The present tenant of the parlours had been there only two months, and was a source of real anxiety to the kind-hearted widow.

Claude Maitland had come to her an utter stranger, instead of being, as was mostly the case with her inmates, recommended by a former lodger, or one of the tradespeople.

He was a handsome, pleasant-spoken young fellow, but he was a sad variation from the regular habits wont to prevail in Mrs. Robson's parlours.

Off to London directly after an early breakfast, home at seven or even later, had been the rule of the City gents the widow had received, while the doctor's assistants had been away quite as many hours, only their days were spent in Fulham instead of London.

Mr. Maitland would breakfast at whatever time the fancy took him from eight to eleven. He took no other meals at home; since he never ate lunch, and professed to dine at his club. Sometimes he would not go out all day till seven at night, and would perhaps not return at all, coming in with the milk in the morning, which his landlady declared was enough to give anyone a shock.

Mr. Maitland never had any letters, though he wrote a great many. He explained once all his correspondences went to his club. No one ever called to see him. He had—confessedly—no single acquaintance in Fulham, and he never by any chance spoke about his own concerns.

Mrs. Robson made up her mind over and over again to give him notice. She was not used to such uncanny goings on, she said, and hated mysteries, but though she had actually gone to his sitting room more than once with the express purpose of asking him to find other apartments yet she had never accomplished her task.

There was something about Claude Maitland which disarmed all prejudice when in his presence. He had a rich, musical voice and a pair of blue-grey eyes which—Mrs. Robson declared—could charm a body's heart away. However much she distrusted him away from the glamour of his conversation and his handsome face, once with him Claude could win her over in two minutes to complete confidence in him.

It was Wednesday evening. Mrs. Robson had gone across to the week-day service at St. Ursula's. Nan was at home with a bad headache. Mr. Maitland was busy writing, but had graciously declared he should not want anything, so that the little maid had accompanied her mistress. A great hush had fallen on No. 89. No one would have guessed the first seeds of a tragedy were being sown there.

The parlour blinds were drawn and the gas lighted. Claude Maitland sat at the table which was scattered over with many papers. His examination of these did not seem to have been satisfactory. There was a desperate, hunted look on his face, which took nothing from his good looks, though it gave an anxious, haggard expression to his beautiful blue-grey eyes.

He was a man not much over middle height, with a thick moustache hiding his upper lip, while a beard concealed the lower part of his face. His features were good and clearly cut; their regularity and their strange pallor gave him almost a statuesque appear-

ance. His forehead was broad and smooth, his dark brown hair was nearly black and curled lightly; but strikingly handsome though Claude was, his eyes gave his face its greatest charm. They were large, lustrous grey eyes with a tinge of blue in their depths, and these eyes could speak any language he chose; tenderness or mirth, anger, reproach or scorn, all these passions could be reflected by these wonderful eyes which their owner knew full well how to use.

He pushed aside the papers with a groan and something like a smothered curse.

"Pshaw! It's the same old story—money. I must have money, or I might as well throw up the sponge."

He was faultlessly dressed, a ring of some value sparkled on his finger. He did not look in the least like a poverty-stricken man, and yet it was even as he said—money was desperately wanted.

"I'm tired of everything," he muttered. "How can a fellow keep straight with empty pockets? I've done my best. I've offered my services to everyone who advertises for a secretary. I've sent my papers to editor after editor, and a few have gone off, just enough to keep body and soul together, but I can't go on like this. I'd rather end it all with a bullet than keep on living from hand to mouth in this fashion. I'd better have died when I had that bad attack of fever in the Bush than have come to—this."

There was a little leather case lying half concealed among the papers, and Maitland's hand sought it convulsively as he finished speaking. No need to ask what it contained. This strange young man always kept a pistol by him. He had odd views of life, and often contemplated suicide. Things were at a very low ebb with him now, far worse than anyone suspected.

"I'd have done it days ago," he muttered, "if it hadn't been for Nan. Poor little Nan, she is actually fool enough to love me."

Mrs. Robson believed her daughter and her lodger on the most formal distant terms, and yet it was for Nan's sake Claude Maitland lingered on in the dull little rooms at No. 89, and it was for him that the girl had deceived her mother, and pleaded a headache as an excuse to stay away from church and secure a little time with her lover.

She came in just as Maitland's hand had found the pistol. Quickly concealing it he rose to meet her, a great tenderness in his eyes, his voice full of love.

"My darling, I never hoped for this."

Nan was barely eighteen, ten years or more Claude Maitland's junior. Her mother thought her "nice looking," one or two of their Fulham friends declared she would not be so plain if only she had a little more colour; but Claude Maitland, from the first moment he set eyes on her, thought her the loveliest woman he had ever met.

He had travelled in many lands, and seen many beautiful faces, but to him there was something surpassingly attractive in Nan's soft, tawny hair and dove-like hazel eyes. Her pure colourless skin, her dark eyebrows and lashes accorded so well with those clear, steadfast eyes, that earnest sensitive mouth.

Nan wore a plain white gown, without a touch of colour about it, and her glorious hair was coiled round her little head in thick, tawny plaits. She looked so gentle and innocent as she stood there that she seemed to Maitland like a breath of pure fresh mountain air coming to relieve the feverish turmoil of his thoughts.

"My darling!" he murmured fondly. "My darling Nan."

She sat down on a low chair beside him, and looked up at him thoughtfully. It was not the fashion in Delaporte-road to think Nan Robson clever; for the most part people rather pitied her mother for having such a "foolish" daughter, for Nan had never taken to the dress-making, and was not expert at any household duty. Mrs. Robson kept her own counsel, and did not enlighten her

neighbours that her girl earned a nice little sum already by her pen, and that in the future she believed Nan's stories would yield quite a regular income.

"Are things very bad?" she asked Claude gently. She was so far in his confidence that she knew he had been trying hard for a situation ever since he came to Delaporte-road.

"About as bad as they could be," he answered, gloomily. "Little girl, it was an evil day for you when you learned to care for an unlucky wight like me."

"I am not afraid," said Nan, proudly. "you are sure to get on; some day, Claude, the world will recognize your genius and reward you as it deserves."

The praise was sweet to him, her faith was sweeter; and yet the man knew he deserved neither. He cared for Nan more than he had ever cared for woman, but he would not have sacrificed one iota of his comfort for her sake.

"You see, child," he said, gravely. "I've had a spell of bad luck lately. No one will have me for their secretary. My stories come back one after the other 'declined with thanks,' and I'm getting desperate. There was an article I looked on as positive to bring me in twenty pounds—and the publishers won't have it."

Nan looked up wistfully.

"Would fifty pounds be any help to you, Claude?"

"My dear child," he said, eagerly, "it might be my salvation. Don't you see, Nan, no one is in London now; in August town is quite deserted; what I want is a little ready money to carry me on till the autumn fairly begins, and I get a post as secretary to some big-wig."

She smiled, as though enchanted at the thought it was in her power to suggest a way of finding what he wanted.

"Do you remember telling me about your life abroad, Claude, and your great friend Guy Bertram?"

"My dear girl, yes; but that won't bring money. I have written out the most thrilling of my adventures already, and no publisher will look at them."

"I didn't mean that. Look here, Claude, I only saw this to-day, and I thought of you at once."

"This" was a cutting from the advertisement column of a morning paper. Not the fashionable one which Maitland perused regularly with his breakfast, but a less select journal from which Mrs. Robson gleaned the news.

"Fifty Pounds Reward.—Wanted the present address of Guy Bertram, who sailed in the *Ocean Queen* for Sydney in the autumn of the year eighteen-eighty, and was last heard of as starting on a long tour up country. The above reward will be paid for full information of Mr. Bertram's whereabouts or for conclusive proof of his death.—Apply, personally or by letter, to Williams and West, lawyers, Garden Court Temple."

Nan's beautiful eyes never left Claude's face as he read the advertisement; when he had finished she said, quickly,—

"You know you were Mr. Bertram's companion on that up-country tour. You have told me over and over again what wonderful adventures you had, and how suddenly you both decided to return to England. You must know more of his movements than anyone else in this country, and if you don't know his exact address at this moment, you would soon be able to find it out."

Always pale, Maitland's face had assumed a gray sallow tint while the girl spoke. Anyone less blinded by love for him must have seen that for some reason or other the subject of his friend was an intensely distasteful one to Claude.

"Fifty pounds," he muttered, half to himself, "it is worth trying for."

"Of course it is, and," here the girl hesitated, "of course, these people know of some-

thing to Mr. Bertram's advantage, so you would be doing him a good turn too."

"Poor Guy!" Claude Maitland sighed, "we went through a good deal together."

"It couldn't do him any harm," persisted Nan. "People wouldn't offer a reward for his address unless some good fortune was in store for him."

"He wasn't the sort of chap, though, one would expect to have good fortune," objected Maitland. "He went out to Sydney because some great lady objected to his marrying her daughter. You see, Guy was poor, and came of no particular family, and the girl was an only child, and—if she pleased her mother—a great heiress. She was under age, and so the law was on my lady's side, and they were parted. I've heard him tell the tale more than once."

Nan's eyes sparkled with hope.

"The mother has relented, and means to make them happy yet."

Maitland shook his head.

"It's ten years ago, Nan. No girl would be true to an absent lover so long."

"Yes they would," pleaded the girl. "I would be true to you for twice ten years, Claude."

It was true, and he knew it. He stooped and kissed her pure white brow, but the cloud on his own did not lighten.

"You will go to these people, Claude," she pleaded, "and tell them what you know, and then with fifty pounds you won't be so worried about money, and—perhaps you can tell me of our engagement."

Maitland winced. He loved Nan truly, but he hated the very thought of speaking to Mrs. Robson on the subject. As a landlady she was most satisfactory, as a future mother-in-law she left much to desire.

"Fifty pounds won't go very far, my darling," he said, gravely; "and Mrs. Robson is far too prudent to sanction our engagement until I have a settled income. I will write to these lawyers, and tell them I can put them on Bertram's track; but I shan't let out what I know unless I am paid for it."

There was the sound of footsteps in the quiet street; St. Ursula's congregation had been dismissed, and in another moment Mrs. Robson might be expected home. One long clinging embrace, and the lovers separated.

CHAPTER II.

As a office in the Temple, and two men seated in a comfortable private room, in earnest conversation. They had been friends and partners for a good many years.

Williams and West—as the firm was styled—possessed a large practice, and were well known for honourable, straightforward men. The senior partner was the favourite with the more aristocratic clients.

Joseph Williams came of a good old family himself, and he had the polish and refinement, birth and good breeding alone can give; but Adam West had a shrewd judgment and keen intellect which, with some, outweighed his partner's suavity. A wit had once remarked that the partners formed an admirable salad dressing, in which Mr. Williams represented the oil, and his colleague the vinegar; and there was some truth in it.

But all the years they had been associated together the pair had never differed so seriously in opinion as they differed now; and the subject under discussion was of such importance that it had brought Mr. Williams post haste from the breezy corner of Brittany, where he was spending a well-earned holiday.

"I always felt harm would come of it," said Adam, frankly. "I suppose she was in her right mind, but it was a most iniquitous will."

"Eccentric if you like—hardly iniquitous; and I don't see exactly, my good fellow, that harm has come of it."

"You believe then in the identity of the

gentleman we are expecting here this morning?"

"Of course I do!" said Williams, growing just a little impatient, for he hated contradiction. "His story is trustworthy at every point. Who but Blanche Tempest's lover would have the poor girl's letters and portrait? Besides, Mr. Bertram proves that he sailed for Sydney in 1880."

"I don't see it. He proves a Mr. Bertram sailed then; he doesn't prove he was the individual."

"You are as obstinate as a mule!" retorted his partner. "You will say next that Mr. Maitland is a fraud as well as his friend!"

"I don't particularly admire him," returned Adam, who had the courage of his opinions; "but his candour is refreshing. He told us he was desperately hard up, and that fifty pounds would be a god-send to him, adding his only chance of getting it was through us, as his quondam friend Guy Bertram hated him so much he would rather fling away the chance of a fortune than let his old comrade share the spoils."

"I wonder," said Mr. Williams, thoughtfully, "what rook they split upon? The breach between them is no common one, for Claude Maitland positively refused to meet Mr. Bertram. He gave us his address, but declared he could do no more, and now our client requests us as a favour not to mention Mr. Maitland's name to him."

"It's odd."

"But hang it all, West, I see no reason for misgivings. After all, we have to carry out Lady Tempest's will, not to sit in judgment on it. She charged us to find her heir, and having done so, our part in the proceedings is ended."

"I suppose so," said Adam West, drily. "Only remember, please, Mr. Bertram may not cut a single tree at Tempest Mere or alienate one penny of the income until he has a son and heir. Failing the birth of a son he is simply a life-tenant, and my lady's injustice is not quite irreparable."

Lady Tempest Mere, had not been dead many months. She was one of the wealthiest clients of the firm, though not one of the oldest, having only transferred her affairs to their management when her husband's death left her a comparatively young widow with a splendid fortune at her disposal.

Sir William Tempest was born lucky. An only son, he inherited a fortune from both parents. He gained a third with his wife, and made a fourth by some marvellously successful speculation. He bought an estate, changed its name to Tempestmere, and settled down as a county magnate.

The knighthood bestowed upon him late in life was a tribute to his many services to the neighbourhood where he lived. He left a million of money behind him and one only child, the Blanche so pathetically referred to by the old lawyer. Blanche had had one sister some few years her senior, but she married against her parents' wishes, and was cut off entirely from her family.

Lady Tempest must have felt fate was dealing her a cruel blow when Blanche seemed inclined to follow in her sister's steps and throw herself away upon Guy Bertram, who had a bare three hundred a year and no expectations. But this lover was made of very different stuff from the young man who had wooed the elder Miss Tempest. Lucy and her husband had been content to marry first and trust to being forgiven. Guy Bertram was intensely proud, and took umbrage at the very first hint from my lady that he wanted Blanche's fortune. He went off, declaring he would never return unless Lady Tempest herself sent for him and admitted how she had misjudged him.

They were both proud, and between the two poor Blanche was sacrificed. She had never been strong, and she faded gradually out of life before her lover had been gone three years. It must have been a bitter sight to the mother to watch her slow decay; but she

made no lament, never showed by word or deed that she repented her share in the past.

Only when long years after she followed Blanche to the silent land and her will was opened, it was found she had made an effort at reparation. She had left Tempestmere itself and her whole fortune to Guy Bertram "for her daughter's sake," with the single condition that a son was born to him within five years of the bequest. Failing the advent of this son Bertram would only enjoy the estate and income for his life, with no power to alienate any portion of either, and everything would revert at his death to Lady Tempest's next-of-kin.

Messrs. Williams and West were the trustees, and they were empowered to spend any reasonable sum not exceeding five hundred pounds on tracing Guy Bertram and bringing him home to enjoy his good fortune.

This was the will which Adam West stigmatised as iniquitous. In his judgment Lady Tempest should have left her fortune to her daughter Lucy. The strangest part of the whole business was that Lucy never made the slightest claim to her mother's property. She had been married and cast off by her family years before my lady transferred the management of her affairs to Messrs. Williams and West, and those gentlemen had never heard her married name.

Lucy made no sign. The only creature in the world who might justly have objected to Lady Tempest's will uttered no complaint, and the will being perfectly in form, and their client having been in sound mind, the lawyers, who were joint executors, proved the document at once, and promptly advertised for Mr. Bertram's address.

They had repeated their advertisement six or seven times when it attracted Nan Robson's eye and she showed it to her lover.

Mr. Maitland sent a very hasty letter from his club; but the lawyers, on their side were cautious personified, and refused to go farther in the matter unless he gave them a personal interview.

So Claude called on them one day and gave them the address of a quiet street in Brixton, where he declared Guy Bertram was living.

There were vexatious delays, because Mr. Bertram was absent for a holiday in Germany, but at last he appeared on the scene, bringing with him Blanche Tempest's picture and love letters, and papers which proved his voyage to Sydney in eighteen hundred and eighty, which was the last fact of his career Lady Tempest had learned.

The fifty pounds had been paid to Claude Maitland, and this morning was to witness the final scene in the drama, the formal recognition of Guy Bertram by the executors, the handing over to him of a cheque book and various small sums of ready money, while one of the partners would accompany him to Temple Mere, and present him to the servants there as their lady's heir. Only now, at the eleventh hour, Adam West had exasperated his chief by suddenly bringing forward a doubt.

"I suppose it's all right, but after all, you know, we've only had circumstantial evidence. No one who knew Mr. Bertram before he went abroad has come forward to say 'this is the man.'"

Joseph Williams was honestly angry. As the senior partner he ought to have been the harder to convince; and he resented his friend's remark almost as a personal injury.

"Of course you have joint power with myself. You are co-executor, you can refuse to recognise Mr. Bertram as Lady Tempest's heir if you think fit."

They talked for a full hour, and, finally, decided Guy Bertram—the claimant they were then expecting—was the real man and should be installed in his new property that very day.

Adam West, however, never gave up the point he had made. He agreed Guy Bertram should have his rights, but he still declared his identity rested on circumstantial evidence, not on proof.

The gentleman was punctual to the moment; most of us would be with a million at stake.

Joe Williams thought, as he looked at him, poor little Blanche Tempest had shown good taste, for Gay Bertram's face was most attractive and wonderfully engaging.

Adam West thought the while their visitor had soon forgotten the poor child who had broken her heart for love of him. It seemed impossible the romance was ten years old, and Bertram a man not far from forty.

He could have passed for thirty any day, and he bore no trace of grief or sorrow.

His face was free from lines or furrows. He had the air of a man possessing plenty of money, looked as though he moved in the best society, while his closely cropped dark hair would have given him a military appearance, only that he was totally destitute of moustache, his face being perfectly clean shaven.

"That's what makes him look so young," thought Adam. "If he were concealed he'd grow a moustache and beard as soon as possible, for his mouth spoils him. It may be a good shape, but it's distinctly weak. I'm a bit of a physiognomist, and I'd never trust anyone with such a mouth and chin. There's cunning as well as weakness written there!"

Quite unconscious of this verdict, Gay Bertram was trying to make himself agreeable to the elder lawyer.

He touched very lightly on his own history. He had been home from Australia a year, and was living on his own small income, eked out by his pen; of course it was far pleasanter to be a millionaire, but (here he sighed deeply) Lady Tempest had other claims on her, and he feared there were those who would resent her kindness to himself.

"I think she ought to have left half her fortune to her daughter," said Adam West, bluntly.

"She had no daughter," replied Bertram, promptly. "I heard her sister's story from Blanche's own lips. She died within a year of her ill-fated marriage."

"Then who is the lucky heir-at-law who will take everything eventually, if you don't provide yourself with a son in the next five years?"

Gay Bertram shook his head.

"I haven't the faintest idea. The gentleman may keep up his spirits, for I have not the least intention of marrying."

"Not to preserve your inheritance?"

"No. I am the last of my family. I have no inducement to seek a wife, I don't believe in second love, and my heart is buried in Blanche Tempest's grave!"

"She is buried in the village churchyard," said Adam West, abruptly. "I suppose you have often visited at Tempest Mere, I daresay you will remember some of the old servants there?"

Gay shook his head.

"I was never a guest at Tempest Mere. You see, I was not Miss Tempest's acknowledged suitor. I saw a great deal of her in London; but the moment her mother discovered our attachment I was forbidden the house, so I have never even seen her country home."

"I propose to take you there to-day," said Mr. Williams, cordially. "You must leave your signature at the bank; after that I should propose our starting for Blankshire at once."

Gay Bertram hesitated. He looked almost entreatingly at Mr. Williams.

"If it is a little country village, I suppose the affairs of the Tempest family are well known there?"

"Oh dear yes. Every villager for miles round will know you are their poor young lady's lover, I can assure you."

"But will they be up in arms at me, a stranger, coming to the Mere? I'd rather not go among them if you think I'm likely to be pelted with rotten eggs or anything of that sort."

"You need have no such fears. You will rather be received as a hero of romance. All the younger servants were dismissed with a year's wages. The housekeeper and butler

are in charge, but if you don't care to keep them on you need have no scruples, for their late mistress left them a pension."

Gay smiled half sadly.

"Do you know, Mr. Williams, even now I can hardly realize my good fortune, it seems almost impossible that I am a rich man. I keep on fancying it is a dream, from which I shall wake presently to find myself once more a struggling artist."

"It's real enough," said Joe Williams, simply. "Poor Lady Tempest looked on it as the only reparation in her power. You are young still, Mr. Bertram, and I sincerely hope a happy and useful life is opening before you. Take up your position as a landed proprietor at once, and let my next piece of business for you be to draw your marriage settlements."

Gay Bertram sighed heavily, and Mr. West almost forgave him his untroubled appearance. He must have cared for the dead girl after all, if the mere mention of marriage was so painful to him.

Gay Bertram and Joseph Williams drove off in a cab together to the bank first where the new millionaire inscribed his signature in a clear, distinct hand, and then on to Victoria, there to take the train for Copsleigh, the nearest station to Tempest Mere.

The lawyer did a little private business on his own account while they were waiting at Victoria. He sent off two telegrams, one to Mrs. Jordan, the housekeeper, to tell her to send a carriage to meet them at Copsleigh, the other to the Rev. George Smith, vicar of Copsleigh Down, to say that he was bringing the new Squire to be introduced to his inheritance. And as a result of these messages Lady Tempest's open carriage was waiting at Copsleigh, and when they had driven five miles and were turning in at the lodge gates of Tempest Mere, the bells of the village church burst out in a joyous peal. The chestnut avenue through which they passed was lined on either side by an eager, expectant crowd, from whom there broke forth, as with one voice, a hearty cheer.

"Long live the new Squire, the new master of Tempest Mere!"

Gay Bertram bowed his head and smiled his acknowledgments, but he spoke no single word. Joseph Williams, looking at him suddenly, noticed he was trembling from head to foot; evidently this first coming to the place where his betrothed had lived and died was too much for him.

"How he must have loved her!" thought the kindly solicitor, then, as they stopped before the grand old red brick mansion, he put one hand on the young man's shoulder, and said kindly,—

"This is the Mere, Mr. Bertram. Let me bid you thrice welcome home."

(To be continued)

A CURIOUS item of interest comes from our Teutonic neighbours in regard to class privileges. The assistants in shops are not henceforth to be allowed to wear other than black dresses during business hours; a restriction, however, which is not very tyrannical, and which is generally observed in our own country, although there exists no corresponding mandate.

A CUP of coffee and a lump or two of sugar are said to be a very acceptable substitute for official and not wholly accurate weather forecasts. Having dropped the lumps of sugar into the cup of coffee carefully, watch the air bubbles that rise to the surface. If they suddenly rush from the centre to the side of the cup, be sure it is going to rain hard. If the air bubbles assemble in the centre and then pass to the side of the cup in a deliberate way, you must still be prepared for what the weather forecasters would call "some showers." But if the bubbles refuse to stir from the centre of the cup, you may go forth to your labours assured of a fine day.

WRITTEN IN SAND.

CHAPTER VII.—(continued)

"I'm sure you're not doing that," said Lora, to whose cheeks a blush had risen, much to her own disgust.

She was four-and-twenty, and she ought, at her age, to be sufficiently self-possessed to bear the mention of a man's name without blushing.

"He's coming to talk it over," added Charlie.

Mr. Hampden made his appearance that same evening. He had not seen Lora for two years, and he could not fail to notice the change which those two years had wrought in her.

In his eyes she was not a whit less beautiful, but there was that about her face which told of much care and of anxiety greater than her years could carry. The meeting between them had nothing in it of awkwardness.

"Your brother said I might come," was the apology Henry Hampden made for treading on what might be reasonably looked upon as forbidden ground.

Lora at once showed him that no apology was needed; at least, as far as she was concerned, the ground was not forbidden.

"I am glad you have come," she said, simply.

It was a meeting between friends, nothing more, whatever the thought that lingered in Hampden's mind as he took in his own the hand that he would fain have held throughout the journey of life.

"And Mrs. D'Arcy?" he asked, when he found himself in the little sitting-room.

"I don't think you will see her to-night. She was not feeling so well, and I made her stay in her room to-day."

"I am sorry. I did not know she was ill."

"She is not ill, neither is she well. Last winter—you know how severe it was—did the mischief. She has never quite got over it. The least change of weather tells on her chest."

"You ought to take her abroad for the winter," suggested Hampden.

"Just what the doctor says," put in Charlie. Lora said nothing.

Hampden repeated the proposition he had made to Charlie. He would give him sixty pounds a year, rising yearly ten pounds a year for ten years. The proposition was fair enough, and even Lora could not see that it was influenced by any undercurrent of personal feeling. Any clerk would receive as much. One stipulation Mr. Hampden made, and that was that Charlie should learn the rudiments of a clerk's business before he should employ him.

"I will arrange it all for you," he concluded.

"And," put in Lora, quick to notice anything savouring of generosity in the transaction, "you will please deduct all expenses from Charlie's salary."

"If you wish it—yes," he said.

"I do wish it."

And so the matter was settled.

In a subsequent interview with his employer Charlie showed plainly that he accepted the future before him with reluctance.

"It is a pity your mother can't go abroad," Mr. Hampden remarked.

"Yes; there's no chance of it," was Charlie's answer. If I had had my degree," and he stopped. He was young but he was man enough to shirk personal confidences. Mr. Hampden finished the sentence for him.—

"You would have done something better in the world? Is that it, my boy?"

"It is," said Charlie, frankly.

"You don't like the idea of business?"

"Candidly, sir, I hate it."

"You would have had your degree in a year you say?" asked Hampden.

"Yes, a year. But my scholarship was at an end, and so it was hopeless!"

"Hopeless—why?"

"The expense."

"True, the expense," Hampden replied, and nothing more was said. But to Lora Henry Hampden plainly hinted that her brother, with his ambitions, was not content to settle down to the routine of business.

"I know he isn't, but what else is there for it?" She glanced at Hampden and his eyes met hers, and she read in them the answer to her question. The hot colour, partly of confusion, partly of indignation, rose to her face, and she turned away with a little petulant movement. He said no word, however. One day, coming upon her unannounced, he found her in tears.

"Miss D'Arcy, you are in trouble."

"I am in despair," was the answer.

"I'm afraid I won't lessen your trouble by what I have to tell you!"

"What have you to tell me? Nothing about Charlie?"

Charlie was by this time undergoing his "commercial training," and had left home.

"It is about Charlie. I see it in your face," went on Lora. "Tell me. I am getting used to trouble now"—she smiled faintly as she made this admission.

"I have to tell you that I cannot fulfil my part of the agreement with him. I cannot employ him as a clerk!"

"Why?" Lora faltered, with twitching lips. "Because he would be useless—worse than useless. Of course I will compensate him for breaking my agreement."

"Oh, no," replied Lora, coldly, with a sudden rush of wounded pride. "Compensation is unnecessary. We will not discuss the subject further."

"But it is all arranged. He is to have his year at Oxford instead."

"No, no. He shall not be under an obligation to—anyone." Lora felt tears of mortification in her eyes, and she strove to keep them back.

"He will not be under any obligation; he is to pay me back in the future when he can. Since I did not choose to fulfil my bargain, I was bound not to turn him adrift. But you have not told me your trouble."

"Mother," sobbed Lora, fairly breaking down. "The doctor says—oh, it's no use."

"The doctor says it's life or death—death to stay here, life to go to a warmer climate. Is that it?" he asked.

"Yes," she admitted reluctantly.

"And the choice is yours," he said.

"Mine?"

She was startled.

"Yes. Will you give me the right to enable your mother to go abroad? In spite of what you told me once before, that you would never love me, I repeat the question—will you be my wife? Don't answer me now, I had rather you thought it over; but, in thinking, do not let the idea weigh with you that Charlie has already put you, his sister, under an obligation to me. I have made him sign a document promising repayment, so the matter is solely between him and me. I do not want to hurry your decision. Take a week if you like."

"I will answer you now, Mr. Hampden."

"I had rather you thought it over first."

"It would make no difference. Time cannot alter the truth, and I am going to answer you truthfully. I am willing to marry you for the sake of my family, and only because I see no other course open to me, if my mother is to be given back to health and strength. For my own sake I would not marry you, because I do not love you. I will give you respect, obedience, and such liking as I have for you now, the liking of a friend. Love I cannot give you. If you do not care to take a wife on those terms, tell me, as I have told you, the truth!"

He took her hand in his own, and bent down his face till his lips touched it.

"Lora—my wife—my queen! I am content."

CHAPTER VIII.

SPRING was already making way for the more voluptuous beauty of summer when the D'Arcys, mother and daughter, returned to England after their six months' sojourn on the sunny shore of the Riviera.

Mrs. D'Arcy had regained her health, and there was no reason, so the doctors said, why she should be otherwise than well so long as she did not again risk the cold of an English winter. And in Lora herself, freed as she was from petty pecuniary anxiety, there was a marked change for the better.

She was more like her old self, more as she had been before misfortune had crossed her path. If her spirits were less bright than in the day of her early girlhood, her manner more subdued, it was only that the soft bloom of experience had overspread her ripened character.

Her appearance, too, had improved; there were no longer those tell-tale shadows under her eyes. A delicate pink, the flush of perfect health, had robbed her countenance of its pallor. If appearance were any index to her mental condition, Lora was perfectly happy.

The weeks succeeding the return home were fully taken up with preparations for her wedding, which, for some reason or another, Lora insisted should take place in Ireland.

"It is my home, you know," she said.

She also insisted on the date of the wedding being kept an absolute secret. So one June morning Lora D'Arcy was made the wife of Henry Hampden, and, in accordance with some other fancy of hers, they went to Portrush for the honeymoon.

Did she want to prove if the memory of that other visit there were likely to overcast her future?

Women take a strange, morbid delight in intensifying their own troubles by scourging the wounded places in their own hearts. Was it for this she chose to recall the other days when she had walked in the same places and looked on the same scenes? Or, did she want to punish herself merely as a salve to her conscience for not giving to this man who had done so much for her and hers the love he deserved?

Portrush was almost deserted. The "season" at this quaint little seaport is contemporaneous with the holidays at the various schools in the North of Ireland, and it was not yet vacation time.

There were not a score of people in the hotel, and of these none were known to Lora, luckily; there was nobody to spread abroad the intelligence that the new comers had only that day become man and wife.

After dinner the newly-wedded pair went out of doors.

"Come along the sands," said Lora, and they went and watched the stars come out one by one as the afterglow deepened into the azure of night, and the moon arose and cast flashing reflections that quivered in a long track across the surface of the sea, and lit up the "white horses" and the crests of the rollers that broke in lines of snow on the lonely sands.

And the sound of the rollers fell upon Lora's ear like a dirge for long ago. It was the same sound she had heard on that summer morning when she had come out to say a long farewell to Jack Lancelot—a longer farewell than she had dreamed of then.

The sands were the same; there was even a single line of footsteps along the smooth surface, left by the retreating tide, and she found herself fancying that they might be his footsteps.

What if it should be so indeed? What if she should meet him and hear his voice once more, and feel the touch of his hand, and he would take her in his arms and call her his Lora, and press his lips to hers in a long, long kiss like that last she remembered—ah! how well?

"Are you tired, Lora?" said a voice, but it was not his.

She started; another was by her side, and he was her husband.

"Tired? No, I am not tired. Ah! there is the same old boat." She spoke as much to herself as to him. "It is the very same place—yes," and she stopped and looked down as if expecting to see her name written there.

"Henry," she said, suddenly, "take your stick and write my name just here."

"No, Lora," he answered, moving away a step or two.

"But, why not?" she laughed, nervously.

"Your name is written on my heart, dear. Is not that enough?"

"But I want to see it here—just here. Give me your stick, and I will write it."

"Where it will be washed away?"

"Washed away?" she repeated, musingly.

"Yes, I suppose so. Washed away." She shivered.

"Lora, you are cold," he said. "Let us go back."

He wrapped the scarf she wore more tightly about her.

"You are so good to me—so good, and I—I have deceived you so. Oh! Henry, if you knew all, how I have deceived you!" she exclaimed, her voice half-stifled with sobs.

"Hush, dear," he said, very gently, trying to take her hand. "I have won you; that is all I care for."

"That is all you care for, yes," she cried, passionately. "You do not care that I am unhappy."

"Unhappy? Heaven knows, I would give my life to save you from unhappiness."

"Forgive me, Henry; I hardly know what I am saying to-night. I remember so much—too much. I know how good you are."

"Tell me what I can do to make you less unhappy," he said.

"You can do nothing, except—"

What?

She hid her face in her hands for a minute. Between sobs she cried,—

"Leave me. In mercy leave me and do not come back—ever. If you knew all, you would pity me and go away now, to-night, at once. I will tell you all, even if you despise me."

"You need not fear that," he answered her, marvelling what her wild words might mean, what was in store for him to hear. "You may pain me, Lora, but I know well you will never give me cause to despise you."

"You know why I have married you," she began. "It was for their sakes. I told you that, and that I didn't love you."

"I will win your love," he put in.

"No, you won't, you can't. To marry you like that was bad enough, without love I mean, but that isn't all. Henry, I love another man. I will tell you all—all."

There, standing in the moonlight, with the cool swish of the waves in their ears, and the cool night-breezes playing on their faces, she told him the story of her love for the man she had not seen since the day they had stood on that very place where he had written her name in the sand. She kept back nothing that might lower her in her husband's eyes; she showed him the whole truth.

"Will you pity me?" she said, when she had ended the story. "Pity me and go away, right away—to-night. Oh, have mercy, Henry. Leave me," she implored.

He said nothing for a few moments. He stood there looking straight out across the moonlit waters, and made no sign that he heard or that he remembered her presence. Presently with an effort he shook himself together, as it were, and turned towards her.

"I cannot leave you," he said, in a low, pained voice, "people would talk."

She gave a kind of little cry.

"People would talk," he repeated. "And your reputation would suffer. Now that I know your trouble I can at least avoid adding to it. As your husband I will at least be able to make your circumstances happier than they have been, but I will not lessen such happiness as I am able to give you by forcing it

upon your memory that you are the wife of a man you cannot love. From this hour forget that we are more to each other than we were yesterday. Let us be as we have always been, friends, nothing more. Husband and wife in the eyes of the world alone, and in the eyes of the law. The nature of the relations between us concerns us two, and not other people."

Liora was crying silently. She could not speak, she held out her hand to him in token that she understood and was grateful.

Without a word he drew it gently within his arm and they set out on their walk back. The little town—innocent of light save that in the heavens—was deserted, as they threaded their way through the streets. Outside the hotel porch Henry Hampden stopped.

"Can I order anything to be sent up to your room?"

"Nothing, thanks."

"Good-night. I believe breakfast here begins at nine."

"Good-night," she said.

When Liora found herself alone she once more gave herself up to tears, why she hardly knew.

As for Henry Hampden he wandered along the rugged path that runs half round Ramore Head. Thence he made his way down the grim black rocks that encircle the base of the grass-crowned promontory, and protect it, as it were, from the hungry waves. Here, alone with his thoughts, he spent the lonely hours of the short night, and the still lonelier hours of a dreary, sunless dawn.

He sat until the morning was far enough advanced to explain his appearance out of doors as due to a propensity for an early bath in the Bine Pool, as the gentlemen's bathing place is called. Nor had Portrush any opportunity for discussing and keeping an eye upon the movements of the newly-wedded pair, for, by mutual consent, they left the place that day. The sound of the waves, and the sight of its sands called up no pleasant memories for either of them.

CHAPTER IX.

"I wish I had something to do," thought Liora, rising a little impatiently from her softly-ushioned easy chair by the fire, and yawning perceptibly from the weariness of doing nothing. It was her daily wish, and the apparent unlikelihood of its fulfilment pressed on her daily with greater force.

What can a woman get to do for whom everything is done? The majority of women, happily for themselves, find their time and thoughts fully occupied in looking after their households and their families. In Liora's case, however, the fact of her husband's wealth shut out the former occupation; there was a housekeeper whose business it was to see to everything in the house and who had been distinctly given to understand that Mrs. Hampden was to have no trouble about anything.

It is so in plenty of houses, it will be argued, and there are plenty of women who never spend a thought on the management of their establishments, either because they do not need to, or because they do not choose to. And they manage to find occupations and distractions; why not Liora?

So she did, according to the world's judgment, according to her husband's too, he it said. As far as social duties went, she occupied her time with them; the best people in and about Liverpool had called on Henry Hampden's wife, and whatever of social gaiety was on foot Liora shared in it. Scarce a day passed that she was not at some entertainment or another.

Then she had all the important business of her dresses to see to, though in truth it puzzled her more to expend the four hundred pounds a year given her by her husband as pin-money, than it had puzzled her in the

days of her poverty to dress on about as many pence.

Her parcel of books came every week from the lending library, and a score of newspapers and magazines were strewn about the tables in her boudoir. She had three or four vehicles to choose from, in which to take her daily drive, and she had the best-stopping pair of chestnuts to be seen in the city for her own use. She had luxuriously-furnished rooms to live in, and not a whim or fancy of hers but was gratified as soon as expressed. What more could any woman want in the way of occupation or distraction? She hardly knew herself.

She walked over to the window and drew aside its soft lace drapery that she might look out. The day was cold and wet, and the street was almost deserted. A woman was passing by on the opposite side at the moment, she looked like the wife of a tradesman.

In her arms she carried a child. Just then she stopped, and turning into the shelter of a doorway, she set the child down and wrapped about it a little shawl which she removed from her own shoulders. Then she lifted the child up in her arms again and kissed it, and the child clasped its little arms about the woman's neck and kissed her, and they went on their way.

It was a homely little incident, not a very great revelation of love, but it made the richly dressed spectator at the window envious in a way that would have astonished her poorer sister.

"That woman is happy," she thought, "she has a human being to love."

She sighed and dropped the lace drapery.

A bowl of many-hued roses stood on a little table beside her; at dinner on the previous evening she had said how much she loved roses. To-day these had been sent from the florist's by her husband's order, and she knew that so late in season this taste of hers had not been indulged at any small cost.

She bent her head to the roses and inhaled their perfume.

"He is so good to me—" she whispered, making the roses her sweet confidantes, as it were—"So good to me, and I—well even if I did grow to love him, as a wife should love her husband, it would make no difference. We are strangers; he said he wished it. And he would never believe I loved him."

There was a choking sensation rising in her throat, and the muscles of her face quivered. The opening of the door prevented emotion from getting the better of her. The manservant entered and handed her a card on a silver tray. She glanced at it. "Lancelot! Jack!" she exclaimed; then, remembering the servant's presence, she coloured a little, ashamed of her own impetuosity and hastily brushed her trembling hand across her hair.

"In the drawing-room? Very well," she said, with an assumption of carelessness. When the man had left the room she glanced at herself in a Venetian mirror. "I wonder will he think me changed?" and it struck her that the dress she wore suited her.

With her hand on the handle of the drawing-room door she hesitated, only for an instant, and then not because she dreaded the meeting or forebore danger, but because it came to her that the Jack Lancelot in the drawing-room would not look precisely like the image she had kept in her heart. She tried to bring the latter clearly before her mind's eye, but somehow it eluded her; she wanted to see what difference there might be between the memory and the reality.

"Who would have thought of seeing you?" she exclaimed, almost before she had glanced at him. She held out her hand fearlessly and composedly.

"Why not?" was the reply. Curt as it was it seemed pregnant with an undercurrent of meaning. She lowered her glance and took refuge in suggesting where he should sit.

"I had great trouble in finding you out," he said next.

"Had you?"

"I wrote to Mrs. Viner, but she did not know. I thought she would, as she told me of you before—the time I was ill."

"You have been ill lately?"

"Not very lately. After I came back. In fact, I took ill on board the steamer before we landed. I was taken to Haslar."

A light began to dawn on Liora. So this was the reason of his silence when her heart had pined so sorely for a single word of remembrance from him.

"And where are you quartered now?" she inquired. She wanted to avoid explanation of the past.

"Here!" he answered.

"Here? Not surely—" she had leaned forward anxiously.

"Are you sorry?" he put in. "I did not issue the order."

"I have been so busy lately," said Liora, the woman who sighed for occupation, ignoring his question, "that I have not had time for the papers, or I should have seen that your regiment was here."

"I was more than surprised when I found we were to be together."

This coupling of himself with her made Liora feel uncomfortable.

"How long have you been married?" he added.

"Six months."

"And I have been back a year." Was the remark a challenge or a reproach? She chose to take it as a challenge.

"I knew when you came back," she said, quietly, but the words showed him on what ground she intended to meet him. After that their conversation concerned others than themselves, and it was therefore wholly unconstrained.

"May I come again?" he asked, when he had risen to take his leave.

"Of course," she said at once.

"He has changed," she thought, when he had left her. "He is handsomer than ever—as I expected he would be. He seems to have become shrewd rather. I felt as if he were younger than myself."

The cool, critical spirit in which she thus measured him was a surprise to herself. "He had certainly changed," she thought, "and not for the better," though she scarcely admitted that. Was it not possible that the change was in her? Unconsciously she had taken her husband as a standard whereby to judge of character, and Hampden was the very reverse of shallow.

Should she tell her husband of this visit or not? The very fact of telling him of it would disabuse his mind of the idea that there was harm in it, she argued. On the other hand it might vex him; it was not in his nature to be jealous, still the least jealous of men would not be altogether pleased at the idea of the woman who bore his name being in the presence of the man whom, by her own confession, she loved with all her soul and would love for ever.

Weighing the difficulty both ways, Liora came to a compromise. She had never told her husband the name of her former lover, and if she merely said that Captain Lancelot had called the name would awaken no particular association in his mind, neither could she be twitted with concealment.

She hated herself for this half-kind of deception, but it was for the best she told her self.

As it happened, Mr. Hampden brought a business friend home to dinner, and until the guest had gone Liora had no opportunity of speaking to her husband alone. He, for his part, broached another subject.

"I wrote to your mother to-day, Liora, and told her that it was time she thought of the sunny south. To-day was so cold, you know. I thought I had better write instead of you."

"You are so good," was all Liora could say, though she knew how inadequate were her words.

He was so thoughtful; the first cold blast

of winter, and he remembered Mrs. D'Arcy. Liora could not bring herself to tell him the half-truth she had resolved upon; neither could she meet his kindness with anything a dread into his mind.

Besides, the very mention of Jack Lancelot's visit was like an acknowledgment that there might be danger in their meeting again. She was not accustomed to give her husband a detailed list of her callers, why should she single out Jack's visit as different from any other person's? It was making a mountain out of a molehill to speak of it at all.

"You look tired, Liora," said Henry Hampden, noticing the somewhat downcast expression on her face. "You must not sit up any longer."

"I am a little tired," she replied. "Good-night."

They shook hands like friends—or acquaintances. Henry Hampden never kissed his wife. Chance came to Liora's aid in the difficulty of telling her husband of Jack Lancelot's visits. One afternoon, coming home from his office rather earlier than usual, he found the young man slipping tea in Liora's boudoir.

She introduced them to one another but to Henry Hampden the name of Lancelot had no special significance. They chatted pleasantly together for the rest of Jack's visit.

"A nice fellow," was Hampden's remark when his former rival had gone. "In the Blue Royals I think he said?"

"Yes," replied Liora. "He asked leave to call. I have met him out once or twice lately."

"You might ask him to dinner one night. I suppose I ought to leave cards at the barracks. You should have reminded me, Liora, when the new regiment came."

And so Jack Lancelot became not only a visitor but a guest at the house of those whose lives he had separated.

CHAPTER X.

THAT every great result has sprung from a source or a combination of sources is infinitely small in themselves, may be regarded as an axiom; but that every small beginning has for its object a great result is not equally certain, nor is it intended that it shall be so.

An oyster patty is a small thing, not only in its material aspect, but looked at from the standpoint which reckons the magnitude of anything by the good or evil it can work.

The utmost good an oyster patty can work is to please a man's palate; the utmost evil is to give him indigestion—material results both.

It was hardly possible to guess, therefore, that Liora had any ulterior motive when she ordered oyster patties for dinner, much to the housekeeper's disgust, in the first place because she was accustomed to regulate the dinner according to her own fancy, and in the second because there had been oyster patties on the previous evening.

The latter objection she pointed out to Mrs. Hampden, who merely said,—

"I know that. See that there are oyster patties this evening," an order which puzzled the housekeeper the more when James informed her that "misses passed the patties." The master had eaten two, however, James said, and had remarked as to the previous evening that they were his favorite comestibles.

The following day, Liora still more astonished the housekeeper by ordering oyster patties again; and on the third evening on which the same dish appeared, Henry Hampden remarked that Mrs. House, as the housekeeper was called, had found out this weakness. Liora said nothing, but she gave Mrs. House a further order to have oyster patties every day.

One evening at the end of a week, Mr. Hampden, helping himself to one patty only, said that Mrs. House evidently didn't understand that one might have too much of a good thing. The result of this was that Mrs.

House presented herself to Henry Hampden the next day before he went out to his office.

"It was Mrs. Hampden ordered the patties to be made every day, sir," and the woman showed by her manner that she resented being given orders.

"You forget, Mrs. House, that Mrs. Hampden is mistress here. She shall order what she pleases." To Liora he said, "You had better not interfere with Mrs. House; she arranges the dinners very well. And I can't understand why you ordered oyster patties night after night."

"I did it to please him," thought Liora, but she said nothing.

Had he been a poor man, she would have found a hundred and one little ways of pleasing him; since his wealth allowed all his tastes to be gratified, she did not well know what to do.

"Are you looking forward to these races?" he asked her one day.

"Yes, immensely. I have never seen a race, you know, and the Calthorpes are sure to have a jolly party for their drag."

"Jolly, no doubt. Will you go if it rains?"

"Not if it is very bad, of course. The top of a drag isn't the best possible place to be on a wet day," she answered.

"You would be disappointed not to go?"

"Yes, dreadfully," and the subject dropped. A few days later, Mrs. Calthorpe said to her,—

"The Brandram is coming on our drag. You don't know her, of course?"

"The Brandram?" queried Liora. "Who is she?"

"Your husband doesn't quite approve of her, I know. There have been stories about her; I don't believe them myself. Besides, it is so easy to get men wherever she is, that is why I have asked her. I think I wouldn't tell Mr. Hampden she is coming. I hope my husband hasn't told him."

"Why?"

"He might forbid you to come to the races."

"He never forbids me to go where I please," replied Liora, a little defiantly.

Afterwards it flashed upon her that this might have been her husband's reason for asking would she be disappointed not to go.

"Perhaps he knew 'The Brandram'—as they call her—was to be there, and finding I so much wished to go, he said nothing. He is so good to me. I wonder would he rather I didn't go? I don't like to ask him quite, but I don't want to vex him. Of course, Mrs. Calthorpe will be offended if I refuse at the last moment. I don't care if she is; he is so good to me."

"You have got a fine day for the races," said Henry Hampden at breakfast on the appointed day.

"I'm not going."

"Not going? Why?"

She was too full of pride to move aside the barrier over such a little bit, unless, indeed, he could not see that she was moving it. So, instead of telling him the truth that it was to please him, she pleaded a headache.

"I have been thinking lately that a little change of air would do you good."

"But I am not ill," protested Liora.

"You might go to your mother at Nies for a month or so."

"Will you go too?" asked Liora, in as careless a tone as she could command, and without looking at him.

"Oh no, of course not. I have a great deal of work on hand—in fact I am behind-hand with it. Whilst you are away I shall get it all done in the evenings; I will not go out anywhere. What do you think about it?"

"I should like to go above all things," said Liora, passing a mental resolution that in future she would refuse all invitations, since he evidently could not well spare the time to go out with her.

And so it was settled that Liora was to go abroad for a while.

(To be continued)

DURING the reign of Henry VIII. there lived in Lincoln, England, a famous bailiff named Joe Dun. Joseph was very clever in the management of his business, and so dexterous in annoying those who refused the payment of an account with which he had been intrusted that to set Dun on him, or "to Dun him," became common advice to the owner of a bad debt. To this personage we owe what to not a few people is the most disagreeable word in the language.

Yet another of our most cherished illusions has received a rude shock from the ruthless hands of science! From earliest childhood the advantages of being "early to bed and early to rise" have been implicitly believed in, even by those who have failed to obey the injunction contained in the familiar adage. And now, behold, a German scientist has arisen to preach the astonishing doctrine that early rising is all a mistake, that it exhausts the vitality, and is altogether pernicious and objectionable. And thus the wisdom of our forefathers is relentlessly turned into folly.

PERSIAN dinners are very much like ours turned the wrong way round. The feast is preceded by pipes, while tea and sweets are handed about. Then the servants of the house appear, bringing in a long leather sheet, which they spread in the middle of the floor; the guests squat round this, tailor fashion. When all are seated a flat loaf of bread is placed before everyone, and the music begins to play. The various dishes are brought in on trays, and arranged round the leather sheet at intervals. The covers are then removed, the host says "Bismillah" (in the name of God), and without another word they all fall to.

A PECULIAR notion existed in the olden times that thunder prognosticated evil or good according to the day of the week on which it occurred. If it occurred on Sunday, it brought about the death of learned men, judges, and others; on Monday, the death of women; on Tuesday, it augured plenty of grain; on Wednesday, the death of barlets and other bloodshed; on Thursday, it brought plenty of sheep and corn; on Friday the slaughter of a great man, and other horrible murders; on Saturday, pestilence and death. It was also a popular fancy that the ringing of bells in populous cities charmed away thunder.

THE Blue Coat School was once able to boast of a coinage of its own. Within the bounds of the hospital the coin of the realm was not current. How the custom arose is not clear. When a boy came to school with money in his purse, the first thing he had to do before he could make any purchase of cakes, fruit, toys, and the like, at the "tuck-shop," was to go to one of the bankers, who noted as money-changer, and exchange his copper, silver, or gold for this "house money," which consisted of copper pieces of an octagonal shape, on which their value was stamped. This curious coinage has now been abolished, and specimens of it have become so rare that few collectors are fortunate enough to possess any.

It is a fact that appears to be not generally known, perhaps because it may not be generally credited, that pure, fresh, cold water is one of the most valuable of disinfectants, inasmuch as it is a powerful absorbent. Every sick room should have a large vessel of clear water, frequently renewed, placed not far from the bed, or even beneath it. This not only absorbs much of the hurtful vapour, but by its evaporation it softens and tempers the atmosphere, doing away with the dryness which is so trying and depressing to an invalid—or even to healthy persons for that matter. It has frequently been shown, by actual experiment, that troubled sleep and threatened insomnia are corrected by so simple a thing as the placing of an open bowl of water near the sufferer's couch. Of course, it hardly need be said, after these matters have been considered for a moment, that water which has stood for any length of time in a close room is not proper for drinking purposes.

A SUMMER STORM.

"So you don't want me?" said Bertha.
"No," said Grandfather Mitcham. "I don't."

The old man sat in the sunshine, smoking a discoloured briarwood pipe.

Bertha balanced herself on the rail of the porch, swinging one slim, ill-shod foot as she looked hard at her ancestor.

"I wish you'd get off that rail and sit down on the bench like a Christian," abruptly spoke Mr. Mitcham.

"Why?" demanded she.

"You'll break it down."

The girl broke into a short laugh.

"I'm not so very heavy," said she.

"Perhaps not; but that rail is a hundred years old," crisply spoke the old man.

"And if I did break it, I could mend it!" rebelliously added the girl.

In answer to this, Grandfather Mitcham only uttered an inarticulate grunt.

Bertha, however, transferred herself to the narrow wooden bench below, a seat which she found not near so comfortable as the porch.

Her grandfather looked towards the meadows, where the men were ploughing and pondering over the crops.

"I don't know where to go," Bertha presently observed, in rather a lachrymose tone.

"Go where I did when I was your age," sharply spoke the old man.

"Where was that?"

"To work—do something—earn your own living," answered he, with an explosive puff of smoke between every sentence. "I earned mine when I was your age, and now I'm old, I don't expect to keep open-house for my relations."

"But, grandfather," protested Bertha, how is a woman to earn her living?"

"Lots of ways," he curtly answered.

"I'm sure I could keep house for you better than old Nanny."

"I'm satisfied with Nanny."

"And, after all, I'm your grandchild."

"Your father married to please himself," said the old man, vindictively, crushing a stray spider with his foot. "I don't know I'm bound to put myself out to please his daughter."

"Well," said Bertha, with a long sigh, "I daresay I can find something to do in Manchester. I might turn factory girl, or get in a shop, or even go out to service."

To all of which remarks her grandfather returned no reply whatsoever.

"Anyhow," said Bertha, spurred to sudden desperation, "I suppose I can stay here to-night, at least?"

"I—suppose—so," unwillingly, acquiesced the old man. "There's no train from here till to-morrow morning at six o'clock, and I suppose it's too far for you to walk to Gaston station."

"What's that tall red brick building off by the hill-side?" Bertha suddenly asked.

"County jail," he answered, as briefly.

And then he rose and went sulkily into the house.

"Nanny," he said to his crooked old factotum in the neglected kitchen, "that girl'll have to stay all night. Make up a bed for her in the top room."

"Roof leaks," Nanny laconically answered.

"Well, then, in the little corner room."

"That window ain't been seen to since last September. The wind blew it out."

"The other room, then, with the Chinese pagoda wall-paper."

"Why, that's the room where the ghost walks!" squeaked Nanny.

Mr. Mitcham uttered a muffled exclamation which savoured somewhat of profanity.

"There's no ghost," said he. "And if there was, Bertha knows nothing about it. Tidy it up for one night. That'll be all."

"There's nothing for supper," observed

Nanny, who was of a parsimonious nature, "except just enough cold pork and greens for you. I was going to do with bread-and-milk."

"That's good enough for Ted's daughter I guess," responded the old man.

And he went back to the porch and the pipe without further parley.

Bertha's place, however, was empty. The brown, clear eyes, the tawny, reddish braids, the cheery, laughing mouth were gone.

The girl, restless with the unrest of youth, had started on a journey of inspection down in the old orchard, where the gnarled trees were garlanded in pink bloom, and a host of tall red lilies swayed to and fro in the May wind.

Next she peeped into the huddle of barns and stables, under the hill, patted the shaggy pony and fed a big-eyed calf with a withered yellow carrot which she picked out of a bin.

"If I was a farmer," she said, "I wouldn't let things go to wrack and ruin like this."

With business-like intentness, she reached down a huge, old-fashioned pistol from its rusty hooks on the inside of the barn door.

"Trigger bent," she said to herself. "Barrel all dented in, but I think it could be fixed. Anyhow, the charge ought to be drawn."

Bertha's father had been a gunsmith, and she had acquired somewhat of his skill in the craft. She eyed the ancient weapon with scornful amusement.

"You couldn't fire it off if you were to try," thought she.

And suddenly straightening up her slim form, she held the pistol belligerently at arm's length.

"Don't! For Heaven's sake, don't fire!"

There was a rustling in a heap of straw in the corner of the barn.

A hollow-eyed man, dressed in rags that were tied loosely about him with strings, crept out almost at her feet. The pistol dropped to Bertha's side.

"Why, who are you?" she cried.

"Get me something to eat," he said, hoarsely. "I've been a day and a night without food. Who am I? Turn the barrel of that pistol the other way, and I'll tell you. I used to have some nerve once, but it's all gone now. Don't fire, I'll surrender! I'm the fellow that escaped from Hamilton jail the day before yesterday. I'm laying low until the first alarm's blown over, but I can't starve. Get me something to eat for Heaven's sake!"

Bertha held tight the pistol.

"You're sure you're not a burglar?" said she, a little tremulously.

"I'm no burglar," he answered. "It was forgery I was sent up for. Can you help me? Will you?"

"I don't know," she said, a great impulse of pity springing up in her heart as she noted the hunger-glaring eyes, the gaunt cheeks, the unshorn beard of the poor fugitive. "What have you done with your prison clothes?"

"Buried 'em in the corner. I found them old things in the harness closet," he added, piteously.

"I'll try and find you something better," said Bertha.

"Stop!" making a grasp at her as she was turning away. "You won't betray me?"

Her brown eyes flashed indignation at him.

"What do you take me for?" said she.

And he sank back among the straw a trifle easier in his mind.

Mr. Mitcham still sat on the porch smoking, when she returned. Nanny was busy at the fireplace.

Both were rather deaf, and Bertha easily abstracted a few articles from the pantry—a yellow pitcher of buttermilk, the stub end of a loaf of bread, and some dyspeptic-looking odds and ends; and it was easy to take a suit of her old grandfather's old worn clothes from the cupboard under the stairs and creep silently away.

"It's a good thing I'm going to-morrow morning," she thought. "But the very first money I earn I'll pay grandfather for these things—yes, and with interest, too!"

She fed the poor escaped wretch, and gave him clothes to wear, and ended by sharing with him her financial all. One bright silver crown she kept; the other she gave to him.

"And now," said she, "mind you take a new start in the world!"

"I'll do my best," said he, eagerly drinking the cool buttermilk, and swallowing the dry bread and leathery cakes in great gulps. "And if everybody'd been as good to me as you have, I'd never have been where I be now."

"Humph!" muttered old Nanny, "the girl's worse than a seven years' famine! Three cakes and half a pie gone, besides what she eat at supper time! We should be ruined if she stayed here long!"

"She's a nice-looking girl," said Mr. Mitcham. "If I wasn't so poor, I should like to keep her."

In the middle of the night Bertha, who slept the sleep of youth and health, quite undisturbed by any suspicion of the ghost, was roused by an awful crash, a blinding blaze that seemed to scorch her very eyes.

The old house was struck by lightning. The chimney had settled into a shapeless mass of ruins. Here and there the woodwork was ablaze, in spite of the sheets of rain that descended with a rushing sound like the waves of the sea.

Old Nanny, with a patchwork bedgilt wrapped around her, was hobbling away as fast as she could.

"Nanny! Nanny!" screamed Bertha, from the window. "Where's grandfather?"

"I don't know," croaked the beldame.

"Do you suppose I'm going to stay and be burned to death?"

And it was Bertha who groped her way to the old man's room, helped him to dress, explaining the while what had happened, and led him down to the nearest place of shelter until the storm was over.

Nor were they any too soon. They had scarcely got clear of the old house before the charred beams fell in, and only a framework of fire remained, luridly outlined against the ink-black sky.

With morning light the terrible tempest was past; but there lay the smoking heap of ruins where the hundred-year-old Mitcham farmhouse had stood in the red shine of sunset.

"We'll build it up again. Bertha, we'll build it up," said the old man, feebly. "It's the place where I was born, and the place where I hope to die—where I should have died last night, if it hadn't been for you. Where have you been, my girl? Your shoes are soaked with the wet grass, and you look as white as death."

"Only to the barn," said Bertha, "to see if all was right there. The pony is safe, and the little calf and all. Now, grandfather, good-bye! The train goes at six, you know, and—"

"Well, let it go!" said Mr. Mitcham. "You ain't goin'. You stood by me when Nanny would have left the old man to die like a roasted rat in a trap. You saved my life. Do you think I'm going to let you go now?"

"Oh, grandfather, then—then you want me after all?" sobbed Bertha.

"Yes, I do want you. And I mean to keep you always. I've got more money in the bank than folks know anything about, and I guess we can build up the old house nice and comfortable, and live there and be happy, you and I."

"But, grandfather, I must tell you first."

A full confession was trembling on Bertha's lips, when one of the neighbours came running up the hill.

"Heard the news?" said he. "There's been a big landslide down over the railroad at Gaston, and the express would have been

wrecked, sure as guns. If it hadn't been signalled with a red silk handkerchief tied round a lantern, and the lantern's your old barn light, Mr. Mitcham! And the fellow that signalled it and saved all the lives in the train was that runaway chap from Hamilton: and, as it happened, the warden himself was on the train, and he says it'll be a queer thing if they don't get the governor to sign a pardon for him. For he might have taken to his heels and run away; but he got recaptured saving the express train. And he saved it too—yes, he did!

"From Hamilton!" repeated Mr. Mitcham. "What runaway chap?"

"And then Bertha took fresh courage and told him all the simple story."

"My girl," said he, stroking her red-brown hair, "you did right. You're a good girl. Ain't there something in the Bible about 'him that is ready to perish'? Yes, Bertha, I want you more than ever now."

And so, in the storm of that summer night, a new career was opened alike to innocent Bertha Mitcham and the guilty wretch who had been condemned to Hamilton jail for forgery.

Truly, there was yet a place in the world for them. They were both wanted.

PRETTY PENELOPE.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FENELope gave the best attention possible to Miss Riley's ball gown, but she found it difficult to be her natural self. On other and ordinary occasions she would have flung herself into the matter most heartily. She was essentially feminine, and she had her weakness for all pretty things and surroundings.

"I advised pink," Mrs. Warriner said, as the delicate diaphanous garment was held out at arm's length and criticised and admired.

"Madge had a mania for nothing but black of late, and although she looks very well in it, I thought a light colour would be pretty for a change."

Madge affected to think the frock would be a failure, or rather that she would be a failure in the frock. She put a bunch of the soft drapery under her chin and made a face at her reflection in the glass.

"Makes my brick complexion a little more bricky," was the remark, "doesn't it, Pen?"

Fenelope tried very hard to seem deeply interested, it was not easy work to concentrate her thoughts.

"I think you look charming, Madge. How are you going to wear your hair?" she said, and despite the effort she was glad to rush into the subject of the ball toilette, eager to escape any questioning or comment on Marcia or Denis or Lady Susan or anything to do with them for the moment.

"Oh! the usual way."

Madge replaced her dress on the bed and looked over her fan, gloves, and shoes; everything was ready for putting on.

"I am awfully sorry Dr. Westall cannot come," Mrs. Warriner said after awhile. "I am sure it is as great a disappointment to him as it is to you."

"Mrs. Langridge is always having a fit of something at the most inconvenient times; she might have waited until to-morrow!" Madge cried with her impetuous wrath, seating herself on the hearthrug in a favourite squatting attitude.

"Did you ever hear such a heartless little individual as she is, Pen? I don't believe she has faith in anyone, except perhaps the clergy, as represented in one or two favoured individuals."

Madge flung a cushion at her sister, and even Fenelope found herself laughing at the scarlet confuted face before them.

"If Mr. De Burgh is at the ball you will give him all sorts of kind messages from me won't you, Madge?" she said, and then the smile gave way to a sigh—the thought of Harold de Burgh brought up such a host of memories—visions of the past that could never never come again. The delicate tender sweetness of her mother's presence, the days when Lucie had been always near with her accompaniment of gentle, practical sense, patience and industry.

How long, long ago those days seemed! Could it only be little more than a short year and a half since that time at Waverton, that merry, laughing, youthfully intolerant, mischievous time when she had skimmed the rooks like a bird, and had teased and quarrelled and been reconciled to the big handsome boyish young man whom her girlish heart had learned to love immediately, and her girlish, reckless pride and will had determined must never be her love? The thought of Harold de Burgh was closely knit up with these memories that were so sad and yet so beautiful. She would never forget the rector's true friendship to her mother nor the tender kindness he had shown her throughout their intercourse. Little pictures of the past rose before her vividly—the day of her accident, when he had driven her home so carefully, his aid in helping her to disguise the truth from her mother; the comfort his refined ministrations had given the dying woman; the dozens of small acts he had performed for her; then at the last that letter in which he had put his love before Fenelope and prayed her to be his wife.

It had hurt her often to realise she must have hurt him in the short refusal she sent; yet, when she had heard from him again, there had been nothing but kindness and tender thought. Fenelope had a strong yearning for Harold de Burgh to come now again on the scene. Surely such a man, such a nature, could be able to cope with the magnitude of trouble and misery that spelt the meaning of marriage between Denis and Marcia Latimer.

She rested back in her chair and covered her face with her hand for an instant—tears that were irrepressible sprang into the blue depths of her eyes. She was acutely unhappy, unbegged beyond measure, and full of uncertain dread. Lady Susan's recital had struck deep into her heart. The fact that Denis had gone away, even though only for a very short time, was almost a blow; to her it was a proof indisputable that the stories that had come to her must be even worse in their reality than rumour had said. The burden must be indeed weighty that could thrust Denis from his duty and his path of honour and right.

The girl's heart hungered over the man in his suffering; all the old reproach and remorse awoke in this moment. She took to herself the whole burden and blame of his misery; she saw his ruin, his troubled life, as her doing and hers alone. She sat so silent, and in such an attitude of pain and mental distress, that Mrs. Warriner, with that instinct of delicate tact that marks the true woman, rose and went softly away, giving Madge a sign to follow.

Madge did not follow, however; she misread Fenelope's sorrow. Her heart had a dull, dead pang in it in that instant; but to falter in love and loyalty was something that Madge Riley did not understand.

"She loves him after all," was her quick thought. "Poor little Pen, and this is the meaning of her changed looks and sad eyes. It will be hard to try and forget him—very, very hard; but if it is to give Pen happiness—and then—then he loved her! What shall I do? Can I speak to her?" A second's hesitation, and then Madge took her resolution. "Yes, I will, I must—What is gained by waiting?—and—and it will help me a little to help her."

Fenelope suddenly felt two arms about her, and lifting her pale tear-stained face she looked into a pair of true eyes—not unshadowed with

sorrow maybe, but carrying a staidness and affection indescribable.

Madge spoke out the burden of her thoughts quickly, abruptly, as was her fashion, yet gently, too. Fenelope did not follow her at first, for her head was beginning to ache now in a dull desperate way; but as she caught the meaning of her friend's words she thrust weakness, regret, remorse and old memories aside.

"Madge, dear," she said, tenderly, "how good you are! What a true, kind sweet heart! Do you know what a sacrifice you are offering me, dear Madge? I am not fretting over what you think. My feelings for Harold de Burgh have never changed. I like him, I honour him, I trust him, I am grateful to him. He is a man I am proud to call my friend; but love!" she shook her head with a despairing sigh that was almost a moan, then went on quickly, "it is not I who love him, is it, Madge? What of your own heart, dear? I read your secret long ago, and I am so glad—so very very glad, for you will make him happy. Put all this thought of me out of your mind, dear Madge. Between Harold de Burgh and me there is nothing but a true, a sincere, and I hope a lasting friendship; believe me, that is the absolute truth—"

"I wanted to see you happy, Pen, and I thought—" Madge paused an instant. "You have something on your heart," she said, when she spoke again, "and I imagined perhaps you were regretting."

"Ah, yes, I am regretting," Fenelope cried with sudden passion, "but not that, Madge—not that—no, don't ask me any more to-night. Another time,—soon, perhaps—I will tell you all my little story. What a silly little story it will sound! and yet it has had such big results, such a terrible end." Fenelope brushed her eyes roughly with her hand. "Don't let us talk any more of this. I shall spoil all your pleasure, and give myself a headache that will not improve matters."

Madge sat down on the ground, and stared at her friend.

"I have a very very good mind not to go to this ball to-night," she said, deliberately, "I hate leaving you alone with that cat."

Fenelope was conscious of a thrill of vague pleasure even in hearing this suggestion; but she had not the slightest intention of permitting any such action on her friend's part.

"My dear Madge, what an idea! What do you suppose will happen to me?"

"I don't know. She is a cat," was the answer, given with uncompromising frankness.

Fenelope's brows contracted. She had lost all spirit or desire to defend Marcia, at least for the moment, yet it was a pain to hear harsh words of her, not so much for her sake as for Denis Latimer's.

"Besides, she has no love for you," Madge went on, as she clasped her arms about her knees. "In fact, I am quite sure she hates you well."

"Madge, you must not say such things, dear, please—please."

"Oh! I am not casting any invidious distinction on you: Mrs. Latimer scatters her hate with a generous hand. You know, Pen, I can't understand how she comes to be in the least related to you, and though I was never quite fond of Mrs. Roobdale; she is something very very much nicer than her daughter!"

"Poor Aunt Julia!" Fenelope thought to herself sadly; the future that loomed so blackly ahead for Denis Latimer and his wife would have much pain and bitterness for Mrs. Roobdale, of that Fenelope was quite sure.

"Honestly," Madge went on, "I would never have given Marcia credit for developing into an individual with so much character, even of such a disagreeable kind. I regarded her as a good-looking nonentity, the sort of handsome well-dressed girl one meets every day of one's life in London; but Marcia is not at all ordinary. I said once to Dr. Westall that she gave me the creeps; she was so odd, almost uncanny, and all the answer he gave

me was one of his grunts. You know how he does it, sort of settles any question right off without more ado, so I shut up and said no more, though I feel pretty certain he quite agreed with me!"

"Marcia is much changed!" Penelope said, in a pained voice. "I—I scarcely know how to understand her; it must be her health—Madge—it—"

"Fudge—nothing of the sort—it is temper pure and simple; she has a detestable temper, and she is jealous beyond every sort of description—there is no need to look farther for cause of her hatred against certain individuals—for instance—" Madge put her head back critically and surveyed her friend.

"Really, it is not at all surprising she should find a little cause to be jealous when she looks at you, my pretty, pretty little Penelope!"

Penelope started to her feet.

"Oh! don't—don't, Madge," she said with sudden entreaty, such a flood of new painful thoughts arose swiftly and suddenly in her mind at these words. Suppose Marcia should have—

She broke the thread of thought instantly and with sudden relief; no, this horror at least would be spared her, must be spared her.

Marcia's manner showed as yet she had no inkling of the truth. That was very evident, for Penelope had learned by this time to know that when Marcia's suspicions were aroused she did not permit herself any constraint or put any barrier on her tongue. Therefore, since her manner with her cousin was so nearly affable and pleasant, Penelope felt most surely that as yet Marcia could know nothing of the love that had lived in her husband's heart, nor of the great love that was always for him, could be put out his hand and meet it.

It must be her task, Penelope decreed in these swift changing thoughts, never never to let Marcia know the truth, not for her own safety, but because she did not desire that any further pain should arise in this unhappy marriage through her.

The conversation between Madge and herself came to an abrupt ending here, for lights were brought and Mrs. Warriner came in to report she had been in to see the invalid, who stated she was very sleepy and would like to be left quite quiet for another hour or so.

"So there is no need for you to bother about her just yet," Madge said. "Come along, let us go and eat some dinner, and then you shall sit there and watch me dress as a great treat, no less!"—Madge looked keenly into the big blue eyes—"unless you really, honestly and truly would rather we did not go. Now do speak up, Pen, we are not babies. We shall most probably have more balls in the future than we shall care to attend. We can easily do without this one!"

Mrs. Warriner joined her views with her sister.

"I wish Dr. Westall had come, and then Madge would have had a chaperon, and I could have stayed with you," she said, when Penelope received all this kind thought with an absolute refusal to accept it.

"You must not dream of staying away. Why, everybody will be so disappointed, and to think of wasting the beauties of that gown on the desert air of Thicket Croft. Pardon the thought, Madge, dear. Don't look at me as if you imagined you saw two gigantic beasts about to crush me up!" Penelope was forced to laugh at the expression in Miss Riley's eyes. "Come along, suppose we go and discuss the dinner as you proposed. I believe I feel hungry!"

A statement not founded on fact, for when they sat down to the dainty meal spread for them, Penelope could not swallow a mouthful.

Her two friends were troubled about her. They could not quite follow or understand her most evident anxiety and restlessness, not having the faintest idea of what was pressing on her mind. Finding however that she shrank from any question or remark, and also that

they would give her genuine pain if they insisted on remaining away from the ball, they said no more about it, and turned the conversation on general matters, on dogs and horses in particular.

Penelope went immediately after dinner to see Marcia. The room was in half light, and Mrs. Latimer was evidently sleeping, for though her cousin spoke her name in a soft questioning way there was no answer, and no movement from the figure in the chair.

Penelope withdrew again noiselessly. It was a relief to her to be spared much speaking with Marcia under the existing circumstances, and she dreaded so much lest her cousin should begin to talk of Denis, and confide any of her imaginary wrongs to her.

Penelope felt she could not bear that. It would be beyond her in her agitated miserable condition of mind. She was glad to steal away to her own room and sit down and rest for a few minutes in the dark, leaning her beating head against the cosy cushions of her favourite chair, shutting her eyes, and trying not to think, if possible.

She experienced, as all such natures as hers must experience in moments of intense excitement, that thought became an absolute demon, a something with an almost personal individuality that tortured her brain, poured fresh matter perpetually before her to be sorted-out, questioned, solved, racked her unceasingly, and made her weary head whirl and her spirit faint within her.

She hoped in this moment almost despairingly that Marcia might sleep on for some time. She felt sure that such a burst of rage and fury as Lady Susan had described must have exhausted a frame already weak and faltering, and she was glad, too, apart from her own feelings, to think that the pain of the accident, which Marcia had described as so acute and distressing should have been smoothed into oblivion if only for a short time.

By-and-bye the rustle of skirts in the passage warned her that her guests were ready to depart. They were starting in good time, Penelope, very wan and weary, went downstairs to see them off. With many a tender word and kiss, Madge confided her two canine treasures to Pen's charge, and gave the two dogs due notice they were to take great care of the mistress of the house and guard her from all harm.

Madge looked very bonny in her pink gown, and Mrs. Warriner was a charming foil in black with some gleaming jewels.

Penelope stood in the doorway with a dog, disconsolate and miserable, on either side of her, and waved her hand as the carriage rolled away.

Most of her household had begged permission to go over to the scene of the excitement and gaze at the grand folk going in. Naturally, Penelope had been delighted they should go, and gave them hearty permission. As she shut to the big door, however, and heard the sound reverberate through the old house, she shivered with sudden swiftness as with cold, and gave a nervous glance about.

Downs, the old butler, was pottering still in the dining-room: she could hear the clinking of glass and plate. Dannie, the doorman heard it too, and faithfully trotted off to see what he could find, while Billy, the bull terrier, mournfully made his way to his proper mistress's quarters, there to repose with one of her slippers as consolation till his quick ears caught the first sound of the carriage wheels returning from the fray.

Penelope went in search of the medicine Dr. Gregory had promised to send. Downs had none to give her, it had not arrived. She spoke a few kind words to her uncle's faithful follower, and then turned to go up to Marcia. She had heard, with a sudden contraction of the brows, that every maid and servant with the exception of her house-keeper, Kate's mother, and Downs, had gone off to the ball. Under ordinary circumstances Penelope would not have cared whether the house were full or

empty, but to-night the very atmosphere of her home seemed changed in an odd, indescribably, uneasy manner; all Madge's jests at Marcia came back to her and took a deeper significance. She tried to shake off the feelings that were upon her, but could not succeed in doing so. With a weary sigh she resigned herself to the inevitable.

She had had a long exciting troubled day. She must bear with the results as such a day, and accept her mental condition of being natural, though it was excessively disagreeable.

The lights were still low in Marcia's room when she opened the door, but Mrs. Latimer was not asleep this time; she was sitting up in her chair, toying rather than eating with some food the house-keeper had brought up to her. Penelope shut the door and advanced to the fire with some gentle word of inquiry.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PENEOPE's first thought, as she stood looking at her cousin, was one of sympathy: she said to herself almost unconsciously that she had never seen anyone look so ill as Marcia did.

The subdued lights made Mrs. Latimer's pallor excessive, almost unnatural. She had a ghastly tinge in her cheeks, her lips were ghastly white; her eyes, set in deep black circles, seemed phenomenally big. It was well-nigh impossible to realise that this phantom-like woman, prematurely aged, worn and haggard, could be one and the same with the fine, handsome, dashing sort of girl that Marcia had been when Penelope went to pay that visit to her aunt in town.

Despite her sympathy, however, which was absolutely genuine and sincere, Penelope could not dispel that vague sense of repugnance that Marcia's presence aroused in her mind; she was also conscious that she trembled a little as with fear. Penelope never remembered to have ever felt before exactly as she did now; she had, indeed, always laughed at superstition and nervousness as being outside her character, and something feeble and incomprehensible; but she realised to-night she had been wrong to do this, for she was beset with a nervousness, an apprehension that was not to be explained or dispelled.

Marcia did not answer at first to Penelope's inquiry how she was. She moved the fork restlessly to and fro on her plate, making a scratching noise.

Suddenly she looked up.

"Are they gone?" she asked, abruptly.

Penelope answered "yes." Her nervousness increased; she felt an intangible, indefinite change in Marcia's manner. She had a terror, all at once, that what she had dreaded was about to come. Marcia was going to speak of Denis, and she must listen and bear all in silence, for to attempt a defence would be an impossibility, and to pretend a sympathy she did not feel would be another.

Marcia gave an odd little laugh.

"I am relieved to feel that abominable Riley girl is out of the house, if only for a little while; she is such a detestable creature," she remarked, shortly, "so common, and so hideous."

Penelope felt a rush of indignation at this remark on one whom she loved as a friend and honoured as a guest, but she curbed her feelings.

"I am afraid you have not eaten much dinner, Marcia," she said, trying to assume an air of lightness which was not an easy thing.

Marcia shrugged her shoulders, laughed again that odd mischief laugh.

"What does it matter whether I eat or not!" she said, bitterly.

Penelope knelt down and stirred the fire. Immediately she had done so she regretted vaguely what she had. Marcia's face, seen in the blaze of light from the coals, gave her a new and further sense of discomfort.

"You must not talk like that," she said, still kneeling on the hearthrug, and shielding her face with her delicate hands, "you know it matters a very very great deal to everybody whether you are strong or weak."

"Does it really?"

Marcia's sneer was unmistakable. Penelope dropped her hands, rose to her feet, and stood by the fire. She paused a moment before speaking; she was not only nervous but she felt angry in this moment. There was an undeniable lack of gratitude or affability about Mrs. Latimer now.

Penelope braced herself up for all that was to come. She purposely refused to see Marcia's sullen humour or her sneer.

"I hope you are not in great pain," she said, gently. "I am very sorry to say that the lesson Dr. Gregory promised to send has never arrived. It only uncle G— I mean Dr. Westall—had come as I expected to-night—"

Marcia turned swiftly.

"He is not coming?" she asked.

Penelope told her of the telegram. Marcia said nothing, only smiled to herself. There was a moment's silence between them, during which the blaze and crackling of the fire was the only sound in the room.

Penelope drew a swift breath like a pain. If she could only leave Marcia! Five minutes alone had gone of the ordeal that stretched before her! How should she endure the rest?

Marcia suddenly broke the silence.

"I always considered myself an unlucky person," she said, speaking in an odd, jerky way, and addressing no one in particular; "but in future I think I shall change my opinion. For once, at least, luck has come to me. I must make the best of it—yes, I must make the best of it now I have got it!"

Penelope did not follow the meaning of these words; but the sense of depression, of nervousness closed in upon her more heavily. She stood by the fire uncertain, almost awkward. She did not like to leave Marcia, and yet her cousin gave her no inducement to stay.

Had she been able to consult her own wishes she would have gone to her own room, and have tried what rest and complete silence would do for her aching head, and for the tumult of miserable thoughts that burdened her heart.

"Do you know why I consider myself particularly in luck to-night?" Marcia asked all at once, abruptly.

Penelope tried to laugh.

"Indeed, Marcia, dear, I do not. I cannot see how such a painful accident as you have had could be regarded as being anything but unlucky."

Marcia leaned forward, the full light of the fire-blaze illumined her face.

"Are you sorry for my accident, are you sorry I should suffer pain?" she asked in the same odd manner that had sat on her through the past few moments.

Penelope answered unhesitatingly.

"Of course I am sorry, Marcia, dear. How could it be otherwise? I am more than sorry you should have the smallest pain or illness."

Marcia's eyes blazed like fury, her lips drew themselves into a thin line. She paused an instant, then in cold, clear, distinct tones she said,—

"You are a liar and a hypocrite, Penelope Desborough!"

Penelope shrank back as from a blow.

"Marcia!" she cried, sharply.

There was hot, wounded pride in the one word. The force of this insult gave her sudden strength and courage as she realised all it meant.

"You are a liar and a hypocrite!" Marcia repeated, but not very distinctly, her lips were stiff with the rage that was consuming her. She was trembling with excitement and with the fury of her mad jealousies and hatred. She rose swiftly from the chair, and before Penelope's unbinged nerves could comprehend all

that was happening she had swept to the door, turned the key sharply, and put it in her pocket.

"Perhaps you begin to see where my luck comes in now, my dear cousin," she said with that shrill horrible imitation of a laugh. "Perhaps you begin to understand a little."

She was walking slowly towards Penelope, who stood by the fire petrified into silence and stillness by the horrible fear that ran through her veins.

Marcia, as she advanced in her slow way across the room, the flickering light showing her white infuriated face, her arms crossed over her bosom, had an unnatural and terrible look.

Penelope realised in this awful moment what before had been vague, incomprehensible to her, odd words: Dr. Westall had said about Marcia's condition, Lady Susan's indescribable aversion, her own fear and nervous repugnance.

The face before her was the face of one who whose mind was more than unsettled, whose brain was not only disordered but diseased.

The girl was bewildered for one moment by the swiftness and weight of the horror that had come upon her, but she rallied her courage and called up every grain of her moral and physical strength.

There was but one thing to do—to humour the mood of the moment, no matter what it cost her. She braced herself up for the attack. She saw that the storm was about to break. She knew instantly that the security which she had imagined and believed was wrapped about the truth of Denis and herself did not exist at all. Marcia by some means had learnt the story. Penelope must suffer the consequences of such an unhappy circumstance.

As these thoughts flitted like lightning through her brain for one instant the intensity of her fear gave way to relief in the remembrance that for this time at least the horror of Marcia's jealous fury would be shared by no outside person, that her tender, beautiful, sad secret would not be laid bare for all eyes to see and all minds to question.

This and a sudden swift pang of agonised sympathy for the man she loved filled Penelope's thoughts in the silence that followed on Marcia's last speech, but it did not last long.

She was no coward, as we have shown; for love's sake she had borne with and hidden the most intense physical pain, had gone through a daily task for weeks almost at the risk of permanently injuring herself, and all for the sake of love; therefore Penelope could never be branded with cowardice. Yet her vigorous young heart grew like stone in her breast, and a cold perspiration broke out on her brow as she let her eyes meet the pair before her, and the full danger of her position was suddenly revealed to her.

The absolute cunning Marcia had displayed in pretending a serious accident, the words she had spoken of her sudden good luck, the expression throughout her whole person—all this would have revealed to Penelope that she was face to face with a horrible danger, if even she had not seen Marcia's swiftness to avail herself of the only means of keeping her victim a prisoner and so having her in her undisputed power and at the mercy of her savage will. Penelope subdued the sick feeling that overcame her with a strength that despair lent force to.

"I do not understand you in the very least, Marcia," she said, speaking as steadily as she could, but vaguely conscious that the sound of her voice was strangely hoarse and indistinct in her ears. "Please be frank with me. I am ignorant of having done you any wrong, and I am at an absolute loss to know what your present extraordinary conduct can mean! If you have anything to bring against me, any cause for quarrel, let us speak of the matter quietly and decently, and not indulge in foolish and unnecessary scenes!"

Her voice grew steadier and clearer as she

spoke, and she reared herself to her full height. Her contempt and her dignity were as so much fuel to the flame of Marcia's fury. She leant her head forward with a sort of serpent-like movement, and then, before Penelope could draw back, she had put out her hand and grasped the girl's wrist with her slender, burning fingers in a grip that was like iron.

"You have done me no wrong? You—you—you who are the cause of all my misery, you who have done me the greatest harm one woman can do another! You—liar and hypocrite—are words too good for you!"

Marcia ceased suddenly. She gave a half staggering movement as though she had received a blow from some invisible person, her eyes became staring and fixed. She seemed to fight for actual breath, but she did not release her hold on Penelope's arm, and, conquering her difficulty, whatever it was, she went on, her voice this time thick and uncertain,—

"My husband has gone, Denis has left me, all the world will know it and laugh, and it is you—you!" Again she fought for breath. "Lie to me it is not you, tell me you did not know, that it was not you who made him go! Oh! how I hate you, how I hate you!" Vigour came back to her all at once. "How I have longed, prayed for this moment, to have you alone, to tell you what I think of you, to make you suffer—suffer as I have done! I—I—"

Once again there came that half-staggering, half-bending movement; the words died away into a moan, there was something like froth about the pallid lips. Her fingers unloosened involuntarily from their grip.

Penelope, released from the contact of those fingers, tried in vain to move, her limbs seemed frozen; through her brain ran the agonized cry, "Oh, heavens! what shall I do? What shall I do?"

She was caged in like a rat, there was no escape, no one to come to her help. The bell-ropes was at the other side of the room; were she to make a step in that direction Marcia would be upon her, those hard, burning fingers might twine themselves this time not about her wrist, but about her throat!

Penelope did not lose her consciousness for one single instant. No merciful oblivion came to relieve the exquisite torture she was suffering. She could do nothing but stand rooted to the spot and send up that agonized cry from her heart.

It was useless to try and evade the truth—useless to seek to disguise her danger. She knew that in this moment Marcia was no sane woman, and that the one burning purpose in her maddened brain was to do her some injury—some evil. Penelope's, whose soul shrank before this thought, did not know what to do, how to act.

If only there had been someone near—someone who would hear her voice if she called loudly and suddenly. Memory brought deeper despair. There was none to help her, if even she would have called upon them for their aid, though was was face to face with one of the most horrible situations any woman could face.

Remembrance of Denis, of all that lay outside and beyond, did not pass from her. If only she could temporize with Marcia, argue with her, bring her into a human mood! To speak was to augment the mad woman's unreasoning anger, yet Penelope resolved to try the force of words again.

She turned her head courageously to the figure standing so strangely motionless beside her. In all her great agitation it was evident to her that Marcia was going through some terrible physical ordeal, she seemed contracted as with a sudden agony, her hands were gripped together and pressed over her lips.

Penelope's courage came back with a rush.

"Marcia," she said, hurriedly, "Marcia, you are ill. Let me help you."

She put out her hands imploringly. Marcia, with a sort of contortion twisted herself away,



[MARCIA HAD TO CLUTCH A CHAIR FOR SUPPORT, AND PENELOPE'S FEAR GREW LESS, HER PITY MORE.]

and beat down the outstretched hands with a fierce blow.

"Keep away—keep away," she said, the words coming from between her lips as with a supreme effort, "if you come near I will kill you—kill—"

Penelope was conscious of a dull, dead pain from the force of the blow she had received, but she took no heed of it; she saw that Marcia was very ill, it was impossible to shut her eyes to the fact that her cousin was suffering intensely; everything passed from her in this moment, but a desire to do something to alleviate this suffering.

"You are ill," she said, again, "but if you will not let me help you, I will ring, and you—"

Before she could speak another word or move a step, Marcia had flung herself in front of her.

"You shall not have help. I have got you here alone. I shall lose my chance. You shall not go—"

She had to clutch at a chair for support, even as she spoke so defiantly. Penelope's fear grew less, her pity more.

"Marcia, dear," she said, gently, "do listen to me. Surely you will listen. You have said very cruel things to me. I hope, I think you cannot really mean them. You are angry with me; but please—please do not let your anger last. On my honour I swear—"

"Your honour—yours!" Marcia broke in, feebly, yet savagely, "you, a woman who disgraces herself with another woman's husband. You who—"

"Marcia!" Penelope's last fear went from her. She stood in front of her cousin's crouching figure and pallid livid face like a beautiful avenging spirit.

A world of indignation, of horror, of contempt blazed from her eyes; but she checked the words that trembled on her lips, she realised the folly of speaking any remonstrance at such a moment, and, indeed, her very just

anger gave place once more to pity and uneasiness as she looked into Marcia's face, and saw the story written there.

"It is impossible for us to discuss this thing now; another time, when your anger is less, when you are calmer."

Marcia gave a short, low laugh; all suffering as she was struggling with some almost overwhelming pain, fighting for breath, her purpose was not one iota lessened.

"You are very clever," she said, in that halting, uncertain way, "but we are not going to wait—you and I! You take me for a fool; but you are mistaken. I am no fool; I am an injured woman, and I will have my just revenge. You shall not live to crow over me, to sit and laugh at your work. You got my husband away, you shall answer to me for it—do you hear? Answer to me!"

"I will answer to you most certainly, Marcia, for any wrong I have done you," Penelope said, gently. The spectacle of the miserable wreck of womanhood before her sent a pang through her. "Do not think I want to avoid an explanation; I only want to postpone it. Can you not see how bad all this agitation is for you? You are ill, in pain; I entreat you to let me help you. If you get into bed and rest, it will perhaps do you good, Marcia."

Marcia stood silent an instant. The expression of her face showed only too plainly she could make no answer for a moment.

Penelope put out her hand once again, and tried to lead her. There was no blow in answer this time; she was conscious of a distinct thrill as some swift spasm of pain swept through the woman's frame before her. She began to plead, to urge.

Marcia made no sign; but all at once she began to speak. Her voice was little more than a whisper, but it went direct to Penelope's already overweighted heart, and made her chill with a feeling not to be described.

"I am ill, you say! I know it—I am dying!

When they come home they will find me dead, alone with you—you will have killed me! You love my husband, you want me to die. You are my murderer! Go to Denis now, if you dare take his love—you, who have killed his wife! May you be happy, you wicked, wicked—"

Penelope's arms went about her cousin suddenly.

"On, Marcia! Marcia! may Heaven forgive you and help us!" she cried, wildly.

Her strength, her courage, her endurance went from her; she was trembling in every limb, yet her sense of womanly pity did not desert her.

Death indeed seemed written on Marcia's face and in her ears. Even as Penelope's whole strength was put out to support her, she gave a gasping sigh—a sort of horrible moan, of pain—and slipping heavily from those slender arms, she sunk in a huddled mass on the ground at the feet of the girl she called her murderer!

(To be continued.)

In the present day, when so much is said about woman's rights, it will delight women to know that although the judicial bench is now monopolised by man, at least once in the history of England a woman acted as judge. This was in the reign of Henry VIII., and the woman to whom the unique honour fell was Lady Anne Berkeley, of Kate, Gloucestershire. She had appealed to the king to punish a party of rioters who had broken into her park, killed the deer, and fired the hayricks; and his majesty granted to her and others a special commission to try the offenders, armed with which she opened commission, empannelled the jury, heard the charge, and, on a verdict of guilty being returned, pronounced sentence.



["MADAM," SAID ANNESLEY, TO MRS. NEVIL, "I MUST DECLINE TO KNOW THE LADY YOU HAVE JUST PRESENTED!"]

THAT DESIGNING GIRL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"By the way, Annesley, why have we so little of our mutual friend's society this term; and why the deuce is he so self-absorbed?"

Annesley frowned.

"Haven't you heard the fellows talking him over? If any man had told me Gilbert Nevil could be such a fool as to forget what is due to himself and his family, I should have scoffed at him. He is getting entangled with a girl quite of the people, you know."

"Pooh! is that all? Flirtations of that kind in university towns count for nothing. Love is like measles, we must all experience it once."

"Nevil isn't the sort of fellow to flirt, he takes everything *au sérieux*; and the girl is very pretty. Of course, she has all to gain by marriage with him, and he has all to lose."

"Oh! he'll never make such an ass of himself; poverty and Nevil would not agree. And now, old boy, I'm off to lectures. What a lucky dog you are to be through with yours! Ta-ta," and with that Fishbourne went with a clatter downstairs out into the quiet court.

Annesley remained behind, his heavy features darkened by a frown. In all the world he loved no creature as he did Gilbert Nevil, and he was jealous of any favour shown by him to others. Now a mere girl of the people held the first place in Nevil's affection, and Annesley was furiously jealous.

"I will save him in spite of himself," he said, aloud; "but I will give him one chance before I begin operations. Perhaps an appeal to his pride may not be without effect. The

girl is sure to have a heap of undesirable relatives."

Looking moodily into the court below, he began to lay his plans methodically, and then he waited until an hour when he was sure to find Gilbert in his rooms, which were situated in the adjoining court.

He found his friend dressing for hall, his proud, handsome face a trifle flushed by the haste he had made.

Sitting down, Annesley regarded him with something of wistfulness in his light, dull eyes.

"You will not come to see me," he said, presently, in his slow, heavy way, "so I thought I would unearth you. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I'm horribly ashamed of myself," Gilbert answered, the flush on his face increasing slightly; "I know I have neglected you grossly, but I have been so fully engaged."

"Of that I am aware; but are your engagements of the nature your people would approve? You don't think I am ignorant of all that is passing?"

"No; unfortunately in a town like this everybody knows his neighbour's affairs better than he himself does. But see here, Annesley, I allow no man, not even my chosen friend, to meddle with my business!"

He looked so handsome standing there vexed and indignant, that Forbes Annesley did not wonder any girl should love him for himself alone; but he did not intend to allow sentiment to weigh with him, so he said,—

"It is not fair to the girl, who looks as modest as she is pretty, and it is most unlike you to compromise any woman by attentions that mean nothing. Give up this ridiculous flirtation."

"Who calls it flirtation?" retorted the other. "It is downright sober earnest. I would not say so much to any man but yourself; but we are old friends, and I tell you

my dearest wish is to call Miss Ross my wife!"

"You'll live to repent your folly. What on earth do you suppose your folks will say to such an alliance? Man, the estates are not entailed. You can be made a pauper at any moment."

"I know that; but I am not afraid. Of course, my father will ride rusty at first, but he will consent eventually. You see, there is no other to take my place."

"And you mean to take advantage of that fact? That is hardly generous, and I am convinced that Mr. Nevil will not so far forget his pride as to receive an illiterate designing girl as his daughter!"

"Don't take that tone with me, Annesley. Miss Ross is quite as much a lady as my mother, and that is saying a great deal."

"Love is proverbially blind; and, by Jove! if I can save you from making an ass of yourself I will. Do the Ross family know of your intentions?"

"They do not. I preferred to pave the way with my father before asking their consent to our engagement; and if he proves obdurate, I shall ask her to wait until I can provide a home for her."

"Ah! my dear boy, when poverty enters at the door love flies out at the window. Your inamorata won't be quite so willing to marry when she learns you have lost all."

"If you say one word in her disparagement, I'll knock you down!" cried Gilbert, altogether stirred from his usual composure; and then without another word he put on cap and gown, and, followed by Annesley, made his way to the hall.

It was noticed by their acquaintances that they exchanged no speech throughout dinner, and that when Annesley rose from table, Gilbert remained behind.

"Has there been a split in the camp?" questioned one of Fishbourne.

He gave a sapient nod, but made no other

reple, and curiosity was rife as to the cause of the quarrel between two such old friends.

Reaching his rooms, Annesley sat down to indite a letter, which evidently cost him some pains, for he frequently tore up half-finished compositions, and as frequently erased or inserted sentences; but finally he succeeded in pleasing himself, and this is what he had written:—

"Trin. Coll., Cambridge,
"Nov. 4th, 18—

"DEAR MR. NEVIL,—

"Remembering all your kindness to me in the past, I feel I should repay it by keeping silence concerning certain matters which interest you nearly. To my regret, Gilbert has formed a very undesirable attachment to a young girl named Ross, whose people are quite of the middle class. As he proposes to marry her with or without your consent, and so ruin all his life, I have determined to interfere in the hope of saving him. He has not yet so far committed himself as to put the momentous question, and it appears her people are not yet aware of the attachment. If you act promptly I believe all permanent mischief may be averted. When Miss Ross finds she has nothing to gain by such an alliance, her affection will doubtless suffer change. With kind regards to yourself and Mrs. Nevil, believe me always yours most sincerely,

"FORBES ANNESLEY."

This effusion he posted himself, feeling he had done a meritorious action; and, in happy ignorance of the impending blow, Gilbert made his way to the Town Hall, where the weekly rehearsal of the Amateur Musical Society, to which both he and Miss Ross belonged, took place. As he entered the big room his eyes lit instantly upon the figure of a young girl.

It was litesome and slender, with an air of natural grace about it, and the face was worthy the form. It was small and oval, with a sweet sensitive mouth, a dimpled chin, and a pair of such dark grey eyes that they were often mistaken for black. Long lashes kissed the somewhat pale cheeks, and little rings of dark brown hair curled all about a low, broad brow, and the white slender throat.

A flash rose to the tender face as Gilbert's gaze held hers a moment, and her heart beat the quicker for the knowledge of his presence; but they greeted each other merely with a bow, and Gilbert took his place amongst the tenors, at just the right angle to see Miss Ross to the best advantage.

The oratorio to be performed was "The Messiah," and the conductor, a regular martinet, gave the singers little rest. It was nearly ten when the rehearsal ended, and Gilbert at once joined the girl. Her home lay at some considerable distance from the Hall, and after passing through two dark and narrow streets, they found themselves in a quiet lane. Then he spoke quite suddenly.

"Maritana, do you love me well enough to bear a little pain if necessary for me?"

"You know I do," she answered, simply, and although her voice trembled her eyes were full of a clear and steady light.

He lifted one small hand and kissed it reverently.

"Dear, I hate to hurt you, but the time has come for me to speak plainly. I owe it to you to acknowledge you openly as my future wife. I should be an utter cad to delay it longer, in face of the disgraceful laws which govern town and gown, and deceit is hateful to me. Tomorrow, dear, I intend asking your father for you, and then I shall acquaint mine with the choice I have made. I am afraid he may be unpleasant at first. He had other plans for me," this as he felt her tremble, "but when he knows you, dear heart, he will be quite unable to hold out against you."

"And if," said Maritana, under her breath, "if he is so angry that he will not relent what will happen then, Gilbert?"

"Oh, he can disinherite me; but he won't do that. If however he proceeds to harsh

measures, I must do as other men have done before me, earn my bread by 'the sweat of my brow.' Will you wait for me, darling, if need be, even though it may be two years before I can come to claim you? It is asking a great deal of you—"

"No! no! my love would be of poor quality indeed if it could stand no test; but Gilbert, oh, Gilbert! I cannot bear to think you should lose all for my sake. If it must be so, will you never reproach me that I cost you so dear? Is it right I should accept so great a sacrifice of you?"

"We won't anticipate the worst, sweetheart. It is foolish to meet trouble halfway, and my father is a generous man."

They had reached her home now; it was a pretty six-roomed house with a bay window and garden in front, a longer garden behind—such houses are as common about Cambridge as the homely little sparrow—and here they said good-bye.

Gilbert took the sweet, loving, anxious face between his hands, and looked earnestly into the dark eyes before he kissed the tender mouth.

"Good-bye, dear; tell your father I must see him to-morrow, and ask him to be good to me for his daughter's sake."

"Good-bye," she said, as she drew away from him, and then she watched him disappearing so quickly through the darkness of the night; and as she watched him she prayed that all good things might be his through all his life, and that her love should never harm him, never bring sorrow into his heart.

Her mother and the maid had gone to their rooms, only Mr. Ross was waiting up for her.

"You are later than usual," he said; "I hope you did not come through the streets alone."

"Oh, no," blushing hotly. "Have not you had supper yet, dear?" with a glance at the daintily spread table.

"Yes, and almost forgotten it," with a jolly laugh. "It is waiting for you."

"I want nothing, dear. Some one is coming to see you to-morrow—some one who has the bad taste to think there is no girl in the world like your Maritana; and—and be kind to him for my sake," and then with a hasty kiss she fled, leaving her father to look sorrowfully into the fire, for even Maritana was no longer all his own.

Five children had been born to him, had lived to attain majority, and then followed each other in quick succession to the grave; and only the child of his old age remained to him—and he could not keep her long. What would home be without her?

He had been a lay clerk at one of the college chapels, and now lived comfortably upon his savings and a generous pension. He had said, years ago,—

"I can leave my children nothing in the way of worldly goods, but they shall have the best education I can afford—that will be better than riches."

His one great passion was music, and all his children inherited it. As they were born he named them, respectively, "Handel, Cecilia, Adeline, Eudyn, and Maritana," the last being the name of his favourite opera; and only Maritana survived, and she was teacher of music in a high-class school.

She was so sweet, so bright, so full of tender thought for others, what wonder that his heart ached with the mere idea of losing her.

He went to bed that night in a melancholy frame of mind. When he rose in the morning Maritana had gone to her duties, and he wandered about the house disconsolately, until at twelve o'clock the neat little maid brought him a card, upon which was engraved, "Gilbert Nevil, Trin. Coll."

It could not be his daughter's suitor, he thought agitatedly. He did not believe in unequal marriages, and no man should play fast and loose with his darling.

He entered the pretty parlour full of such

thoughts, and found himself confronted by a tall, muscular young fellow, with a proud, handsome face.

"I cannot conceive," he said, "what business you have with me."

"I can quickly explain, sir," Gilbert answered. He was favourably impressed by the other's manner, and the evident refinement of taste that the room displayed. Of course it was Maritana he would marry, but still it was a relief to find he would not need to blush for her people. "I have had the honour to meet Miss Ross frequently; the happiness to win her affection, and I have come now to ask you for her hand."

Mr. Ross was impulsive, and his first thought was to welcome Gilbert warmly into the family, but prudence prevailed.

"I like your honesty," he said, gravely, "and you look trustworthy; but I must ask you first what are your prospects? And do you suppose your parents will consent to such a mesalliance as you propose? I cannot deny that through a mere accident of birth Maritana is socially your inferior, although by education and instinct she is your equal. Let us understand each other clearly."

Gilbert felt himself in an awkward position, but he was as honourable as he was proud, and he answered without hesitation,—

"I dare not deny that we shall meet with opposition at first; but I feel convinced that my father will not long hold out against my wishes."

The other shook his head sadly.

"The young are hopeful; but I am afraid nothing good will come of this unfortunate attachment. Personally I should have no objection to you, but it is my duty to see my child's future happiness secured."

"I am willing to give up all for her sake; I am not afraid to work."

"You think not. Ah! but we men love so much more selfishly and lightly than women. Mr. Nevil, I will consent to your engagement to my daughter only when your parents are willing to receive her as your wife should be received; she shall enter no family on sufferance—slights and petty unkindnesses would kill her—and we are not destitute of pride."

"I won't accept your decision. This question concerns Maritana's happiness and mine; no man has a right to interfere between us."

"Young man," interrupted Mr. Ross, "you are talking wildly. Some day, perhaps, you will thank me for the course I am taking. Write to Mr. Nevil at once, telling him all the truth, and on his answer your future must depend; until you receive it I must ask you not to see my child. And should it be contrary to your wishes, I absolutely forbid any further intercourse between you; she must learn to forget, as you will doubtless do. I shall expect to hear from you in the course of forty-eight hours. Allow me to show you out?"

And then Gilbert found himself ignominiously thrust into the gloom of the November day.

He had hoped to see Mrs. Ross—surely a mother's heart would plead for her child's happiness—but Mrs. Ross was an invalid, and never rose until noon; so in a very angry and miserable frame of mind he returned to his rooms. He wrote at once to his father, hiding nothing in the whole course of his love; it was a frank, manly and affectionate letter, without a single touch of weakness, and he felt easier when it was despatched. He dawdled away the afternoon over some new books, in which he vainly strove to be interested, and was heartily thankful when the hall bell rang out its imperative summons.

There, of course, he met Annesley, but they merely bowed, and, before he wished it, Gilbert found himself once more ascending the stairs to his lonely room.

"I am fit for no company but my own to-night," he said, as he turned the handle. "I shall have no rest until I learn how the governor receives my intelligence."

The apartment was in semi-darkness, but

by the light of the small fire he could see a man's figure, grimly erect, the glint of silver-grey hair, and cried in a tone of pleased surprise,—

"Is it possible, father? Why, I wrote you only this afternoon, thinking you were miles away, had I known, I might have spared myself the trouble," and his hand went out to grasp his father's, which to his surprise was withheld.

"I have come, Gilbert, on most unpleasant business, and in response to a communication I received this morning; if it is true, I can only say I am ashamed to call you my son."

There was a moment's pause, in which Gilbert fought hard with his anger, then quietly turning up the lamp he said, "And this communication?"

For answer, Mr. Nevil flung down Annesley's letter upon the table, and watched with stern eyes whilst the young man read.

"It is true that I have asked this lady to be my wife," he said coldly, "and I will marry no other; but Annesley is a cad and a liar, and he shall suffer for this."

"You know what I can do if you persist in your degrading folly? No designing, ignorant woman shall ever queen it in Court Nevil."

CHAPTER II.

THERE had been a stormy scene between father and son, and only the recollection of that father's hitherto unfailing love had prevented the son from forswearing all the past. Yield to his entreaties or obey his commands with regard to Maritana, he would not; and finally in an access of despair Mr. Nevil declared he would see the "young woman" himself.

To this arrangement Gilbert was more than agreeable; he had such faith in Maritana's powers of conquest.

So an hour later, boiling with wrath, Mr. Nevil presented himself at the Rose establishment. Mr. Ross was not at home, but he could see "Miss Maritana" the servant said, and as this was what most he wished, he was ushered into the front room. He was surprised at the evidence of good taste before him; there stood the girl's open piano strewn with loose music, in a corner hung her father's treasured violin; there were choice engravings on the walls, and a general air of daintiness was about the whole place.

At the sound of a light step he turned, and saw standing close by him a girl with a sweet face and lovely luminous eyes; as he looked at her he realised how difficult the task was before him.

"My father is unfortunately from home," she said, in low sweet tones, "but any message you may wish to leave—"

"My business is with you," he interrupted, shortly. "I am Gilbert Nevil's father."

She flushed slightly, and trembled under his abrupt announcement; but if he found it in his heart to pity her he gave no sign.

"Sit down," he said. "I have much to say to you."

Mechanically she obeyed him: her heart was heavy with fear of what was to come, and she clasped her hands fast in the effort to maintain her composure.

"I understand there is some absurd promise existing between my son and you. Now you must be perfectly aware how undesirable and mad a thing the alliance proposed would be—for him. You must have known it from the first, and I consider you are equally to blame with Gilbert."

The drooping face was crimson with shame, but not one word did she utter; and Mr. Nevil, thinking her obstinate, went on remorselessly: "It was not wise to take advantage of a young man's folly, and whatever pain accrues to you from this affair is of your own seeking; and let me disabuse your mind

at once of the idea that by marriage with him you will gain anything."

It was a coarse and cruel speech; Nevil hated himself as he uttered it, only he felt that half-measures were useless here; he hated himself still more, when, lifting her indignant eyes to his, she said,—

"I can bear much from you because you are his father, and you are naturally angry with me; but, being a woman, I should be safe from insult."

"I do not wish to be harsh, but I intend you should understand the truth in all its nakedness; then, if you choose to accept poverty for a life companion, the blame is yours."

"Go on," she said, under her breath, "you are very cruel."

He passed over her words.

"See, I cast myself on your compassion. Gilbert is my only son; I have mapped out such a glorious future for him—he has genius and application too. Will you ruin all his life?"

"I have promised to be true to him always."

"Is it being true, in the highest sense of the word, to drag the man you profess to love down to your own poor level; to make him an outcast from his home and alien to his kin? Can you and he live on love and love alone? I tell you, girl, that when he had lost all he so much prizes, he would turn and curse you that you worked his undoing."

Maritana was white as the frail wind flower, and her sweet face was convulsed with agony.

"Let me plead for myself a moment," she urged, brokenly. "I love him with all my heart, I have promised to devote all my life to him—how can I break my word? Oh! be merciful to us both."

He was touched in spite of his anger against her, and perhaps because he felt that thrill of pity his manner was the more harsh.

"You are both young, you will both forget; but as it is useless to appeal to my son for his own good, I have come to you for help. And now I tell you candidly that should you hold him to his promise, should he so far forget all that he owes to his honourable race, I will at once and for ever renounce him, my doors shall be closed against him, my roof shall afford him no shelter; if he chooses a beggar's lot, as a beggar let him be forgotten—ignored—as a beggar let him die."

He was awful in his wrath, the unhappy girl shivered as she looked at him; then she said slowly, and as one who struggles with one's dear desire, feeling the while how vain it is,—

"You mean that for my sake Gilbert shall be outcast, shamed? Pardon me if I seem stupid! Only this morning I was so hopeful and so happy. But I who love him will not bring this grievous calamity upon him—he is free, utterly free. You will tell him that, and in return for my concession—for do not you see I am giving up all the joy of all my life? I ask but one favour. You will let me see him once again. Yesterday we said good-bye lightly, as those who think to meet on many morrows. Oh! you need not fear," as he made a dissenting gesture, "I will not go from my word."

"I am glad you are so reasonable, and if in any way I can serve you—"

She looked at him with a faint and bitter smile.

"Your help would kill me. But I wish to say some last words to him, and, to prove that I trust you, I will give my message into your keeping."

She hastily wrote a few words and handed them to him.

"I do not wish to read your message," he said, but she insisted.

"Meet me to-morrow at 5.30 p.m. at the old place. Mr. Nevil will tell you all that has passed. We have nothing now to say but good-bye."

"You are proof against his strongest entreaties?" he questioned with a keen glance

at her: did she really love Gilbert less now that she knew how precarious was his position?

She seemed to read his most unworthy thought, for, lifting her head with a haughty new and foreign to her, she answered.

"The remembrance of to night's interview will keep me strong. I shall never cease to care for Gilbert, but I will never marry him unless you yourself ask me to do so!" and he almost smiled at the improbability of such a request from him.

"Then I will carry this to my son; I am sorry that I have had to give you pain, but there was no other course open to me. I hope to hear shortly that you are happily married to some worthy man of your own standing."

"Thank you," was all she said, but he winced under the scorn of the dark eyes, and felt not a little ashamed of himself as he went slowly back to his son to dash his hopes to the ground.

And Maritana lay white and tearless upon a couch, wondering vaguely how she should bear this great grief that had come to her.

On the morrow, dressing herself with less than her usual care, for indeed her heart was too heavy to consider her own appearance, she made her way towards the trysting spot. It was along a lonely lane known as Burrell's walk, and on ordinary occasions Maritana would have been fearful; but despite the dusk and the weirdness of the dull November evening she held on her way until she came to the little bridge which spans a shallow stream.

There Gilbert was waiting her; he took her cold hands into his and peered down into her white small face.

"You should have let me come to your home," he said.

"No, I could not bear that others should know of our parting. Our sorrow is our own and it is sacred."

"Then you have resolved to keep the promise you so wrongly gave my father?"

"I shall keep it," she answered, "even if it breaks my heart."

"You mean that to-night you send me away from you for ever?"

"Unless Mr. Nevil withdraws his objections, yes."

"Then you will never be my wife. For Heaven's sake, Maritana, take back your words. I am stronger than you, and I will not lightly let you go."

"Hush! I have no part in your life any more, though you will always fill mine. But I will not bring poverty and sorrow to your door."

He thought of Annesley's words, and said, bitterly,—

"I was valued, then, for what I could give, not what I am."

With a heartbroken little moan she wrenched herself free of him.

"Ah, that is the cruellest part of it all. They will teach you to believe this evil thing of me, and there will be no one to defend me; but I—I shall never reproach you; only, if after long, long years you care to question after me, and hear that I am still Maritana Rose, you will know at last how much you wronged me."

"Forgive me! I am beside myself with grief and rage. I am a brute to doubt you even for one moment. Dearest, be patient; I will not take my release, not now when you are smarting under the indignities my father heaped upon you. I will wait until you are calmer—until you see for yourself that I can earn sufficient for your wants and mine, and, then, when I come again to you, your answer will be different."

She did not gainsay his words, she was so afraid lest she should provoke him to further entreaties, and she knew her own weakness.

He drew her arms about his neck.

"Listen to me. I will never break faith with you. If we never shall come together the fault shall be yours, not mine. I love you with every best and holiest aspirations of my nature. I will trust you until your own lips proclaim

your falsehood. You shall keep my ring and wear it as a talisman against doubt and despair, and when I have won my place I will return to you, to find you loving me not less but more."

"Never less," she said, gently, but she made no other reply to his hopeful speech.

"In a little while the clouds will break. We shall yet live to smile over our present despair. Kiss me, my darling heart. This is not good-bye, only *au revoir*."

But when they stood again inside the little garden she would only say good-bye, and something in her voice struck coldly upon his heart.

"I wish I could see your face, but it has grown so dark. How you tremble! Kiss me again, dear love; be true," and with her kisses yet upon his lips he lost her from his arms. She had flown to the house, and the door was closed upon him.

Seven miserable days passed. Mr. Nevil had returned home in a state of gratification which was hard for his son to endure or fathom. The term was wearing fast to a close, and Gilbert resolved not to leave Cambridge without an interview with Maritana. Strange that he never now met her in the streets and lanes! But no fear assailed him as he presented himself at her home. This time he saw Mrs. Ross, a gentle, delicate woman, with traces of beauty still upon her worn face.

She received him coldly.
"I have no word of welcome for you, Mr. Nevil," she said. "You have robbed us of our child. After what has happened she could not remain at home. It was absolutely necessary she should have change, and so she has gone away."

"Gone away—Maritana!"
"Yes; she left a note for you—she felt that you would call. Here it is! Oh, Mr. Nevil, why could you not spare us our darling?"

"Gone away," he repeated, blankly, holding the slip of paper in his hand.

"Where is she? It is my right to know that."

"No; you have no claim upon her. Let her rest in peace. You have done her harm enough already. Her secret remains with her own parents—we are not likely to put it in your power to molest her again."

He did not seem to hear her as, opening the note mechanically, he read,—

"MY DEAR AND ONLY LOVE,—
"I am going away from all I love and prize, and I beg you in mercy not to seek for me. The past is over and done with, the future is all before you. Heaven grant that future may be as bright as ever the heart of Maritana can wish. Good-bye."

His arms fell slackly to his side, and the anguish on his tortured face touched Mrs. Ross to compassion. His voice, heavy and laboured, broke the momentary stillness.

"She trusted me so little as this—she never could have loved me. And I—oh! heavens! I came here this morning to beg her again to be my wife; to tell her that for her sake I would now and finally renounce home, friends, ambition. Mrs. Ross, in view of this, tell me where she is, that I may go to her, and show her how quixotic her self sacrifice will be, how utterly ruinous to me."

"No," she answered, gently, but with such firmness that he felt it was useless to combat with her decision, "I will tell you nothing. It is better so—you will acknowledge that one day. Unequal marriages are rarely happy. My constant prayer is that she may forget this episode in her life, and turn to some good man in her own station."

He was hurt and angry beyond measure. It was not a light thing he had proposed to do, and thus he had been met.

"If she is to be found," he said, icily, "I will find her. She will not resist my entreaties," and with a bow he passed out; his pride as well as his love had been wounded.

He met Annesley that day on the landing outside his room.

"How long is this sort of thing to go on?" demanded the elder man. "Is the friendship of years to be wholly set aside by a designing girl?"

"I warned you once what I would do if ever again you spoke disrespectfully of Miss Ross. I am in the mood to keep my word. I owe you a heavy debt; but for you, I might have pleaded my cause successfully with my father. You are a sneak and a coward!"

The heavy face flushed, the dull eyes lit with sudden fire, but Annesley was slow to wrath, at least where Gilbert was concerned, and he answered, temperately,—

"I acted from purely friendly motives."

"Then Heaven preserve me from my friends! Do you know what it is you have done? You have caused a bitter quarrel between a father and son hitherto devoted to each other. You have maligning an innocent girl, brought about her flight."

"She is gone then!" Annesley exclaimed, in a tone of suppressed triumph. "Who was the true prophet, you or I? Did not I say that when she discovered how little marriage with you would advance her socially she would throw you over? Shall we quarrel for the sake of an adventuress?"

In a sudden access of wrath Gilbert struck him a fierce blow. It was so unexpected that Annesley went down beneath it, and lay a moment inert, with Gilbert towering over him, his face all changed and distorted by rage. Then he rose slowly, and as slowly wiping the blood from his lips, said,—

"I might take revenge for that insult."

"Demand what satisfaction you choose, I am willing to give it. No man shall speak lightly of my *fiancée* in my presence."

"Is she any longer your *fiancée*?" sneered Annesley. "And because you have laid up trouble for yourself, because you are mad now with disappointment and outraged pride, I pass over the indignity you have put upon me."

He went away slowly and heavily, giving no sign of the pain he was mentally enduring; and, a trifle ashamed of his ebullition, Gilbert entered his room, and, shutting his door, gave himself up wholly to bitter reflections. Sometimes he doubted Maritana, hating himself all the while that he did so. Sometimes he thought it would be well to forget her, and hold out the olive branch to his father—only love cried out to be heard, and would not be silenced.

Slowly and sadly the term drew to a close; but Gilbert did not return to Court Nevil. He went on a solitary excursion, searching for some tidings of his lost darling, and searching vainly.

At the close of the vacation he returned to Cambridge, the relations between himself and his father being too strained to allow any pleasant meeting. His mother wrote frequently, but as her letters consisted chiefly of complaints and reproaches, he regarded their advent with something akin to disgust.

In the meanwhile Maritana was living her new life quietly, and so bravely she bore her grief that few guessed the burden she bore.

It had chanced that in the school where formerly she had been a music teacher, was the daughter of a celebrated singer, who had conceived a great affection for Maritana, and had written much in praise of her talent to her mother.

On the day following the interview with Mr. Nevil Madame Celoni had visited her daughter, and listened delightedly to the teacher's rendering of one of Beethoven's finest sonatas.

"What a sympathetic accompanist Miss Ross would be," she observed to the principal. "I am inclined to rob you of your treasure. I have been looking so long for a musical companion, for I may as well confess I cannot accompany myself when rehearsing."

The principal was silent a moment. She knew a great deal about her employé's trouble and guessed more. She was large-hearted and generous, so presently she said,—

"Miss Ross deserves a greater salary than I can give, and I would be sorry to stand in the way of her advancement. If, madam, you really wish to steal her, I will countenance the theft. Miss Lusby can supply her place; and, for many reasons, Miss Ross would be happier away from Cambridge."

And the upshot of it all was that Maritana left home four days later with Madame Celoni. She had a liberal salary and a generous mistress. Her duties were light, consisting chiefly in playing to madam's singing in their own private apartments, and superintending little household matters.

For the rest she was treated as an equal, walked and drove with madam, attended concerts under charge of that lady's friends, and, but for that awful heart-trouble, would have been a most enviable girl.

In fear of discovery, on account of the public life they led, the singer had advised some slight alteration in her name.

"It really does not signify," she said, with a little laugh, "I am really Elizabeth Conson, although known to the public as Elise Celoni. Suppose we call you Mary Rose. There isn't a sweeter name than Mary or a lovelier flower than the rose. That is a double-barrelled compliment. I hope you appreciate it."

And so among her new friends Maritana became Miss Mary Rose.

CHAPTER III.

It was now mid-August, and the little watering-place of Westham was full of visitors. It was fast rising into notoriety, although as yet it could boast no public places of amusement.

But it was healthy, pretty, and select, and Madame Celoni had chosen it for her resting-place greatly to the disgust of her fifteen-year-old daughter, the wilful but lovable Trix, who much wished to visit Scarborough.

"No, Trix," madame said, "what I need is rest, and you will find a great deal to interest you at Westham."

So they took a pretty furnished cottage, and were comfortably settled in an incredibly short time, and, the boating and bathing being unusually good, Trix ceased to complain, and only strove her utmost to rival Maritana as a swimmer.

Early one morning they went down to the beach for the "regular dip" as Trix called it, passing on their way two ladies and a boatman.

The young lady was fair and handsome in a statuesque fashion, the elder stately and still beautiful, although her hair was silvered, and her brow had little furrows written by time upon it. She was speaking, and her musical voice reached the two girls clearly.

"Of course it is all very lovely, Madeline, but I do not think you shall persuade me to leave my bed again at such an early hour; old folks are proverbially luxurious."

"Old!" echoed the young lady with a slight laugh, "why aunt, you are only in your prime yet."

"That was an awful fib," remarked Trix, when they were out of earshot, "and I don't like that girl; but the old lady looks nice. Come, I'll race you to the machine. We've got the whole beach to ourselves yet. Oh! what a stickler you are for propriety," as her companion laughingly refused her challenge, "if that is the fruit of being grown up, I'll stay at fifteen until I'm fifty."

When they issued from the machine the sea lay before them like a sheet of silver, and Maritana, who positively revelled in bathing, was quickly down the steps, and, ignoring the ropes, swam to and fro within easy distance of Trix, who was less fearless.

"I say, Rose-Mary" (her favourite name for her friend), "it is a beastly shame you should have all the fun."

"You must not use slang."

"I must and will." She was standing with

her riant young face turned westward, the waves flowing to her shoulders. "I say, those people are coming back. I suppose the old lady finds it chilly."

"Very likely. Don't you think we have had enough, Trix. The beach is getting thronged now. All the lazy folks are coming to bathe."

"I like a crowd; be a good creature and don't leave yet. Oh! if I were a mermaid like you, would not I surprise and electrify some people." A few moments later she added, "They're nearly on us—the boating trio. O! look! look! it has capsized! Rosemary, I shall die!"

Maritana gave one rapid glance towards the boat. It was floating upside down, but the man in charge had caught hold of the young lady with one hand, and with the other was clutching frantically at the little craft.

He would probably right it, and help was already coming from the shore; but ere it could arrive the elder lady might perish before their very eyes.

With one swift prayer to Heaven, with loving thoughts of her dear ones at home all crowding into her brain, Maritana struck out bravely. She saw the silvered head sink once; it nerved her to fresh exertions. With a supreme effort she reached the lady just as she was again sinking, caught and held her by her gown, saying, breathlessly,—

"Be quiet, do not struggle, help is coming. I will save you if I can!"

A pair of dark eyes, which looked familiar to her even in that moment of terror, turned upon her, a faint voice said,— "I will do my best to obey," and with a superhuman strength Maritana supported her.

She saw, like one in a dream, that the boat was righted, two of the trio were safe. She heard the ringing cheers from the shore as help came towards her. Then a thousand voices seemed ringing in her ears, her senses and her strength alike were falling her. She felt slipping—slipping into sheer space! She could hold out no longer. Ah! her dear ones, her dear ones! And Gilbert—he was free, he would never know! Was this death? Ah! how easy it was!

When she came to herself she was lying in her own room, with Madame weeping over her, and the grave face of a kindly doctor bent upon her.

"There, there," he said, soothingly, to Madame, "she is all right now. I told you I would pull her through; although she was more nearly gone than I thought. She wants nourishment now, and plenty of rest. I do not think she will suffer seriously. She is young and strong."

Maritana stretched out one hand to him. How curiously weak and ill she felt.

"Did I save her?" she whispered, and being answered, "No lives were lost," she turned her face to the wall and fell asleep. Nor did she wake until evening was far advanced; and then she would have risen, but this Madame strictly forbade. So she lay in her room until the sun rose next morning, and mounted high in the clear blue heavens. Then her kind mistress came to her, a vexed look on her face.

"Some people are so unreasonable," she said, "and that lady you saved yesterday has sent from the hotel to beg you to go to her. She is ill with inflammation of the lungs, and her niece has no idea of nursing."

Maritana lifted herself on her elbow.

"May I go to her?" she said. "I seem to have a personal right to her; and, indeed, I am quite rested."

"You shall please yourself if you are strong enough. Wait until Dr. Brackenbury comes, he shall decide; but I do think this Mrs. Nevil is a trifle too *exigante*."

"What name did you say?" the girl asked, hurriedly.

"Mrs. Nevil, of Court Nevil. There, I said you were unfit to go. Lie down."

"No, no; does she guess who I am?"

"How should she?" demanded Madame,

really afraid the girl was delicious; but her next words undeceived her.

"I must go. Oh, Madame, I never told you his name; but this lady is his mother. For his sake I will do my best."

"If you are strong enough I will not oppose you," the singer answered, a hope in her kindly heart that all would now be well for her *protégée*, and yet it was with some misgiving that she saw her depart later, looking very weak and fragile.

The story of her heroism was already common property, and folks turned to gaze at her as she passed, the landlord of the one hotel greeted her with polite enthusiasm; but Miss Nevil, looking no worse for her immersion, met her with careless courtesy.

"We do not know how to thank you sufficiently," she said; "but for you I should have had such sad news to send to my uncle and cousin. I think it a little unreasonable of aunt to ask such a very great favour of you, especially as we have called in a nurse; but she has queer fancies, and is well aware I am utterly ignorant of anything connected with nursing," and then without asking Maritana's name, she ushered her into the sick chamber.

Mrs. Nevil turned her head wearily at the sound of the opening door.

"You have come," she whispered, with difficulty, "I felt that you would. Near as I was to death when your hand grasped me, I yet saw enough of your face to make me instinctively trust you. You are not the worse for your heroism? I wish I could be sure of that. I wish I knew how to thank you."

"Will you do so by trying to remain quiet; when you are better we can talk of these things if you wish," the girl said, gently.

"Only tell me one thing; what is your name?"

"They call me Mary Rose," Maritana answered blushing. "I would like you to remember me as Mary."

"You will stay with me dear if your friends will spare you—it is an old woman's sick whim."

"I will stay," quietly divesting herself of hat and cloak, and when she had smoothed out the pillows, she watched until Mrs. Nevil fell into a troubled sleep; then the nurse stole in.

"She will be quieter now," whispered the latter, "there is no immediate danger to be apprehended and she refuses to telegraph for Mr. Nevil; it appears he is in France on some political business. It would be sad if the worst happened, for I understand their only son is in Africa, and of course could not reach England in time for the last scene. Now lie down upon this couch; I will call you if I want you—and you look awfully ill."

Mrs. Nevil was never really in any danger, but the shock had been great to her system, and much fretting after Gilbert had prostrated her, so that she did not recover so quickly as she should have done. In those quiet days she learned to know much of the beauty of Maritana's nature, and once as she fondly held her hand she said, "My dear, I should have been a glad woman if Heaven had given such a daughter to me; Madeline is good and kind, but hardly sympathetic. Did I tell you she is to marry my boy—that is, if he can ever forget his first romance. He is all that is noble, but he unfortunately fell in love with a girl much his inferior, and of course we could not receive her; although he would not believe it, she was nothing but an adventuress."

Maritana drew away her hand as with averted face she said, "Are you quite sure of that? There may have been some cruel mistake."

"Oh, that was beyond the question," with alacrity. "Mr. Nevil went down and interviewed her; and when she found my boy was wholly dependent upon his father, she rejected him, and went away no one knows where."

"She may have done these things for your son's ultimate good," Maritana answered, in a

very low voice. "She may have loved him more than her own happiness: it is no uncommon thing for a woman to do that."

"Let me see your face, Mary, I believe that you are crying—I have sometimes felt as though you had had some sad experience."

The girl turned towards her. "You are right, madam; I have been cruelly misjudged, even as this girl of whom you speak may have been. And knowing now your class prejudices, I think it is only right to tell you that I am immeasurably your inferior—I am a lady only by education; not the friend of Madame Celoni as you suppose, but her hired companion. You have now no further need of my services. If you regret any overtures of friendship you have made, I can only assure you that I shall not reproach you now if you give me my *congé*. But I shall remember you all my life with gratitude for the affection you once lavished upon me. Shall I go?"

"Mary!"

The slender young figure swayed ever so little towards her, but though her heart yearned over Gilbert's mother she would make no effort to win her favour.

"Mary come to me; kneel down by me. Ah child, I don't care how lowly your birth may be, I only know that I wish you were my very own daughter. I do not understand yet how I shall bear to part with you; I should be a happy woman if Gilbert could but know and love you."

Maritana's face was hidden amongst her skirts, and sobs shook her lithe frame. "Don't!" she said. "You'll kill me with kindness," and then, as one caressing hand stole over her bowed head, she felt in her heart that she must tell all the truth, only she was so terribly afraid of the result. But it was good to know that Gilbert's mother held her so dear, that perhaps—one day—though they might never join hands—he would understand all that had seemed so strange and harsh in her conduct.

That night Mrs. Nevil wrote to her husband, giving him a full account of her adventure, which she had suppressed until now, fearing to bring him to her side when so much depended upon his presence in France.

She wrote of Maritana in terms of highest admiration and warmest love, adding,—

"Mary Rose or Rosemary, as Madame's daughter terms her, is humbly born; but, my dear, she is all that we could desire in Gilbert's wife, and I have thought sometimes that Madeline cares very little for him, indeed, she accepted Mr. Annesley's attentions when in town with evident pleasure. Of course he is rich, and Madeline has nothing of her own."

"Madam Celoni and Miss Rose leave here some time next week. I don't know how I shall bear the separation. Won't you run over and see my friend, if only to thank her for saving me? How I wish Gilbert were here!"

"Always your loving wife,

"ROWENA NEVIL"

She felt satisfied when her letter was despatched; but her serenity was disturbed when Madeline, entering her room next morning, quietly informed her that Mr. Annesley intended joining them on Thursday—it was now Tuesday. A faint flush rushed to her faded cheeks.

"Am I to understand by that, that Mr. Annesley considers himself a successful applicant for your hand?"

Miss Nevil smiled benignly.

"I am afraid I cannot contradict you, aunt."

"And what of Gilbert?"

"He is away. If I waited for years and years he would never ask the momentous question. He never got beyond a lukewarm liking for me; and, according to an old, if vulgar proverb, 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' and it is time I settled."

"And what will you give your husband? Is

it pride compelling you to take this tone even with me? Madeline, don't you love him a little?"

"You forget I have been trained to believe all excessive affection vulgar. No, I do not love him; but I shall not make him the worse wife for that. He is rich, and I hanker after wealth. He has some of the finest diamonds in the kingdom, and I adore diamonds. Really, aunt, you don't want me for a daughter; why don't you send for Gilbert, and let him marry as he will? If you thwart him, who can tell but that he may present you with a Hot-tentot Mrs. Gilbert?" and, with a short laugh, she went away.

Of course Mrs. Nevill confided her latest news to Marianna.

"I dare say it is all for the best," she said; "but, personally, I do not like Mr. Annesley; still, if this alliance is for Madeline's good, there is no reason why we should oppose it. However, Mr. Nevill will be with me on Thursday, and then all will be well; and, perhaps (her voice trembling ominously) he will recall Gilbert then."

It struck her that Marianna was unusually quiet and unsympathetic—perhaps she was ill. However that might be she left early, and, hurrying into Madame Celoni's, cried, agitatedly,—

"Let me go home—I must go home if only for a few days. To-morrow Mr. Annesley arrives, and Mr. Nevill is expected almost as soon. I cannot, I will not face them all, the shame of it will kill me."

"Sit down," said Madame, coolly, "it appears to me you are a very foolish young woman indeed. Once before you did your best to ruin your life by flight. I won't permit you to take that course now, even though I have to keep you here by force. Who are these Nevills that you should so fear them? and don't they owe you the heaviest debt of gratitude? They cannot refuse to accept you now."

"Oh, I would not be taken on tolerance," the girl began proudly.

"Hoity-toity! that is how the land lies. Well, my dear, if it is any satisfaction to you to spoil your face by cutting off your extremely pretty nose I'll not stand in your way."

"Oh, don't, please don't! They will hate me all the more when they know how much I have deceived them with regard to my identity."

"I am glad you are so sure of that, it relieves my mind of such a heavy load. But I confess I thought you would have some consideration for Mr. Gilbert. I suppose it does not signify that he must suffer for your pride. Well, if you don't care, why should I? He is nothing to me."

"Oh, you are cruel!" cried Marianna, following her. "You must believe I desire nothing so much as to save him pain now and in the future."

"If that is the truth," Madame answered, bluntly, "you will stay here for the *dénouement*; and remember that the Nevills are your debtors, not you theirs; and I, myself, will quickly suppress any impertinence on their part."

So, against her will, Marianna remained at Westham, and, being full of consideration for her, Madame drove out of the town the following day, thinking that she would thus avoid any encounter with the obnoxious Annesley, supposing he had arrived; and Trix was so full of nonsense that the pale companion was beguiled a little from her own troubled thoughts.

It was growing dusk when they returned, and people were hurrying along the streets in the direction of the pier. As the carriage passed under the full light of a chemist's lamp a man, who was walking with a tall handsome girl started, and asked quickly,—

"Did you see her—the lady wearing the large white hat? Do you know her?"

"Yes, that is Mary Rose, or Rose Mary," his companion answered, hiding her chagrin, "the girl who saved my aunt's life, and

figures now as a heroine. Aunt is never so happy as when she is near. But she is an altogether mysterious young lady and I hate mysteries."

Forbes Annesley smiled grimly, but said no more upon the subject; indeed, he was strangely quiet until they had reached the lovely downs; then he said, with visible effort,—

"Miss Nevill, is it true that there is any existing engagement between you and Gilbert?"

"It is not true."

"Did he ever give you cause to think he loved you? Did you—forgive my impertinence—did you ever care if ever so little for him?"

"No to both questions. I do not consider you impertinent" (this softly).

He was silent a moment, and Madeline was fast growing impatient, when he said, slowly,—

"Will you give me permission to hope—that—that, Madeline! you know what it is I want; will you marry me?"

She gave him her hand; her heart beat high with triumph, but she hid it well, as she let him kiss her cheek, her lips, and heard him murmur words of love.

"There was but one woman for me," he said, his voice hoarse with emotion, "and I believed she was lost to me, thinking she was my friend's chosen wife—and so I stood aside."

He was quite unconscious of any heroism in his own conduct; he was royally, perfectly happy; and yet as he walked homewards alone, it was not of Madeline he thought, but Marianna.

"The artful jade! I'll spoil her sport yet. To think she should have been living in daily communion with them, and they suspect nothing. Well, old Nevill will be here shortly—I'll wait his coming. What a scene there will be! and when it is all over Gilbert will come home and there'll be a general reconciliation."

CHAPTER IV.

"MY DEAR MARY,—

"What have I done that you should suddenly and remorselessly desert me? I am not yet sufficiently recovered to come to you, so I cast myself once more upon your mercy, and beg that you will at least give me an hour this evening. I have so much to tell you.

"Your loving friend,

"ROWENA NEVILL."

Marianna stood with the note in her hand, a troubled look on her face.

"After all," she thought, "why should I not go? Even should I meet Mr. Annesley there he will probably not recognise me—and I have done nothing of which I should be ashamed. I suppose one day Mrs. Nevill will learn who I am, and perhaps she will be angry." She sighed a little, then, giving herself no further time for thought, dressed hastily, and went towards the hotel.

It was dusk when she arrived, and not guessing that Mr. Nevill had reached Westham, she went at once to her friend's apartment. It was in semi-darkness and contained three shadowy indistinct figures; but although she could not see his face, she felt convinced one was Forbes Annesley. In a little certain alcove Mr. Nevill lay apparently asleep. If Marianna had known that, the chances are that she would have turned and fled ignominiously.

"Is the truant returned," said Mrs. Nevill, in a pained voice. "My dear Mary, if you intend deserting me, I can only say you should not have made yourself so very necessary to me. Mr. Annesley, allow me to introduce you to Miss Rose. Madeline, turn up the lamp."

Before Annesley had ended his formal speech, a soft glow of light flooded the room; Marianna stood bathed as it were in it; her

face was unusually pale, and her eyes had a hunted look in them. She knew in an instant, as she met her enemy's gaze, that the climax of her life was reached. He turned from her with a smile of triumph to Mrs. Nevill.

"Madam, I am sorry to be discourteous; but I must decline to know the lady you have just presented. You have been the victim of a very pretty plot. Miss Rose is none other than your *bête noir*, Marianna Rose!"

Not a word did the girl utter, she stood silent as a guilty creature.

"Is this true, Mary?" asked Mrs. Nevill, whilst Madeline drew contemptuously apart.

"It is quite true. I ought to have told you, but I was afraid."

"Did you know who I was when you saved me from drowning?"

"No."

"But when you learned my name, why were you so good to me?"

"Because," faintly, "you were his mother. I never meant to let you know the truth; I was going away in silence. But then, you were so good to me that I grew to love you, and it was very hard to feel that although you had kind words for Mary Rose, you had none for Marianna Rose. I wanted to make you understand that there are loyal hearts amongst the lowly. I had no hope of any good," here her voice faltered, and utterly failed her; but before Mrs. Nevill could speak, Annesley broke in,—

"How can you explain your change of name; that is in itself a suspicious circumstance?"

She would not look at him, but still addressing Mrs. Nevill, said,—

"I left my home with my parents' approval; and at Madame Celoni's suggestion I changed my name, because I was afraid that Mr. Nevill would find me, and—and I was not sure that I was strong enough to send him away a second time. For your goodness to me I thank you; but I will not trouble you with reminders of my existence. I am going now."

"No," cried Mrs. Nevill, "you shall not go! Mary—Marianna! whatever you will, stay with me as my dearly-loved daughter. I wonder no longer that my boy held you so precious." She had risen hurriedly from her couch, she had her arms about the weeping girl, and had kissed her in motherly fashion. "We have been foolishly prejudiced, but when a Nevill learns his error he is quick to repair it. You shall not leave us any more until Gilbert has you safe in his keeping."

"Mr. Nevill may have something to say to that," sneered Annesley; "he is not a man to be easily duped."

A hot retort trembled on Mrs. Nevill's lips, but she was spared all reply, as the curtains concealing the alcove were swept aside, and a man's figure appeared on the scene.

"Mr. Nevill has a shrewd suspicion that he has made a fool of himself," said a voice which sent a thrill of fear through Marianna's heart; "and he will beg Mr. Annesley to treat his wife's friends with courtesy, if not cordiality. Come here, my dear; let me look at you." And hardly knowing what she did, Marianna went towards him. Taking her hands in his, he said, "Can you ever forgive me that I misjudged you so cruelly? Can I ever atone to you for my harshness, sufficiently thank you, serve you, that you saved my dear wife from a dreadful death? I was brutal to you in the past, my child—it is not easy to overcome one's prejudices—but I have learned a lesson which will last me all my life. Your sacrifice in the past shall bring you joy in the future," and then, as with old-world courtesy he led her forward, he added, with a very significant glance at Madeline and her lover, "Miss Rose will henceforth take her place in my household as my daughter; and only those who remember this will be welcome under my roof. I kiss you once, my dear, for your own sake, and once for Gilbert's—poor proxy, I know. Take her, Rowena, you will have your

heart's desire after all," and he pushed her gently towards his wife.

But Maritana held back a moment.

"How may I have forgotten. And, oh! believe me, not even for his sake can I ignore my dear and honoured parents."

"Perhaps you will wait until you are asked," Mr. Nevil retorted, inelegantly, and when he looked round for his niece and Annesley, he discovered they were gone.

But he only shrugged his shoulders with a half-amused, half-annoyed air; and drawing Maritana down upon the couch beside him, began to talk about her past, and to speculate on the happy future when Gilbert would form one of the little circle.

Outside, in the sweet dusk, Miss Nevil turned to her lover, with the impatient query,—

"Has all the world gone mad over that low-born girl?"

"One unit has not," he answered quickly. "I hate her because she robbed me of the only man's friendship I ever really desired. It is true Gilbert never cared very much for me, but I—well, I loved him as a brother. She came between us. I would give half I have to feel that in the end she would not triumph."

Madeline did not quite grasp his meaning, she was so totally devoid of sentiment. She cared very little so that she enjoyed this world's goods, and indulged in her own particular spleen. But it was gall and wormwood to her to feel she must live in daily communion with a girl of the people—a girl, too, who had won the prize she had so long striven for in vain. She lifted appealing eyes to Annesley.

"I am sorry for Gilbert. And, oh! do not think me selfish that at such a moment I can think of my future; but how can I bear the daily companionship of such a creature—I a lady born, she a mere designing adventuress? And you heard what uncle said, she is to be the daughter of the house. I," with a little bitter laugh, "am to minister to her pleasure, and consider myself happy to be allowed to do so. I cannot bear it."

"There is no need for you to do so," Annesley broke in, eagerly. "There is not the slightest reason to linger over our marriage. Let it take place without delay. If you love me, you will let it be so."

It was just the thing she most desired; but she made a faint pretence at resistance, which only called for renewed entreaties from her lover, and finally Miss Nevil yielded gracefully; and the wedding was fixed to take place in a month's time.

Annesley himself had wished it to be consummated without any delay, but Madeline objected to being married without *clat*, and so he yielded to her wishes. In fact in his infatuation there was nothing he would have refused her.

When they returned to the hotel, to Madeline's relief Maritana was gone in company with Mr. Nevil, and after exchanging good-byes with her lover, she went at once to her aunt to break the news.

Mrs. Nevil heard her in cold silence, and at the conclusion of her speech said, frigidly,—

"Of course, I can easily guess the cause for this unseemly haste, and being of age you can please yourself; but I am afraid that for at least a month you will be called upon to endure Miss Rose's society, and to treat her with all due courtesy."

"I cannot help myself unfortunately," the girl retorted, "and I am not given to rapid changes of opinion; neither can I forget my class prejudices as you are able to do; and one day you will be sorry that you fell such easy prey to a designing girl!"

She turned to go, but Mrs. Nevil stayed her with the one imperious word, "Stop!"

With an impatient gesture Madeline obeyed, and the elder lady said,—

"I would not remind you of benefits received, but you force me to do so. From the day you came to us, have we ever denied you anything that would conduce to your happiness? There was a time when I used to

hope Gilbert would make you his wife. I am glad now that it is not to be, because I know you better than once I did; the past few weeks have taught me many things. Madeline, you wrong yourself in despising so pure and good a girl as Maritana. Ah, my dear, if only you would not blind yourself to her worth, if only you would try to make your life more like hers!"

"Aunt, I am not easily deceived, and I am not in my dotage," the girl cried, rudely. "I will not have this low-born adventuress held up to me as a pattern. I am surprised that you should so insult me!"

"And I am surprised that you should so far forget the honour due to me," answered Mrs. Nevil, her face slightly flushed. "I have little more to say to you. Your marriage shall take place at Court Nevil, and then it will remain with you whether you return as a guest to it or no. I advise you not to air your opinions before your uncle."

A sullen look darkened the handsome face, but Madeline made no response. It would be very unpleasant if, after all, she had to be married privately, and if she offended her aunt too grievously such must be her case, because she had nothing of her own.

So, swallowing her wrath, she went to her own room.

"For a month," she thought, angrily, "I must endure this hateful thing; but when once I am Mrs. Annesley, I will turn my back upon Court Nevil and my affectionate relatives. I shall have no need of them then," and she fell asleep with a very satisfied feeling.

When she rose in the morning it was quite early, and she went out upon the beach, meeting Maritana there.

It angered her to see how much beauty the other's sweet face had won since happiness came to her. She was not a fool, and she knew that when her own charms had faded Maritana's would still remain, being of the lasting order; and was not that enough by itself to make such a woman as Madeline Nevil hate her?

"Miss Rose," she said, haughtily, "I have something to say to you, and as it is of an unpleasant nature I am anxious to get it over. I think it ought to occur to you that I should naturally object to being your daily companion, to yielding my place to you. The incongruity of this thing should be apparent even to you!"

She paused, abashed by the look in Maritana's beautiful eyes. The delicate flush had died out of the sweet face, and the tender month had grown proud.

"Go on," she said, with a quiet dignity, which had the effect of making Madeline feel unutterably small. "May I ask what your preface means?"

"You should have guessed," the other retorted. "The fact is, I leave Court Nevil at the end of a month. I am about to marry, but until my wedding day my home must be with my relatives, who have so readily been captivated by you. I want you to refuse to join them until I am well away, because otherwise I must suffer, for neither I nor Mr. Annesley wish to forget, as others have forgotten, what is due to our position."

Maritana looked steadily at her. She knew all Madeline had to lose or gain. If she had been a vindictive woman she would have held her own then, and triumphed over her enemy, but there was no room for malice in her gentle heart, and perhaps she despised Madeline too much to hate her. So she said,—

"Miss Nevil, you may rest assured that so long as you remain at Court Nevil I shall be a stranger there. After the words you have spoken any intercourse between us would be impossible; and, pardon me if I speak plainly, I think there are few girls in my position who would so far forget womanly dignity, womanly kindness, as you have done this morning."

The colour flamed into Madeline's face; she knew that Maritana had only spoken truth, she knew she had degraded herself; and yet

she dared not defy this pale and quiet girl, rather she must be a suppliant to her, so she said, very quickly,—

"I am anxious—terribly anxious about my immediate future, or I would have chosen my words more cautiously. You cannot guess what it is to be a penniless gentlewoman, what shame it would be to me to go to my husband with nothing I could call my own. I am sure you and I could not live amicably together, and, of course, uncle would think the fault mine and refuse to fulfil the promise he once made me. If only you will not prejudice them against me! If only you will say nothing of this interview—"

"I shall say nothing," proudly. "I will show you that mercy you would never accord me, and in return I only ask you to remember that nothing will ever make me ashamed of my birth or my position; that I am proud and glad to know I belong to a not illiterate class—a class that can unite pride with delicacy of feeling and kindness of heart."

Miss Nevil retired worsted, and with a vague feeling of shame in her breast, and this naturally did not decrease her dislike of Maritana; still it was satisfactory to know she should not be called upon to consort with her rival, and by added attention to Mr. and Mrs. Nevil she hoped to accomplish her end. Her uncle had always promised her a small dowry and some of the family jewels, and not for a moment would she lose sight of that fact.

Later in the morning Mrs. Nevil called upon Madame Celoni, who was easily induced to part with her companion.

"Of course," she said, "I am aware that under the circumstances you would not wish her to work for her bread, and I would be most sorry to cause annoyance either to Maritana or yourself." Then she added, confidentially, "I shall be quite lost without her, but I would not spoil her chance of happiness for worlds. She has been as an angel in my house, and I can only regret that you did not discover her worth at an earlier stage. It would have saved so much trouble; and of one thing I am perfectly certain, she will reflect credit on your name."

Then Maritana was called. Mrs. Nevil thought she looked pale and a little weary, that there was even a slight constraint in her manner, but she made no comment upon this, as, having kissed her, she said,—

"Madame Celoni has been so kind that I do not know how to thank her sufficiently. She has kindly given you to us, Maritana, so we will all leave Westham for Court Nevil tomorrow."

Maritana hesitated, flushed, and grew a little tremulous as she answered,—

"I am most grateful to you, Madame, and I gladly accept my release. I am not glad to part with you; but I would like to see my parents before going to Court Nevil. They ought to be my first consideration. Dear Mrs. Nevil, you must not be angry with me. If I could forget them I should be unworthy of your love and kindness."

The lady looked distinctly disappointed, but seeing it was vain to combat her decision, she said,—

"And how long, Maritana, am I to wait for my daughter's coming?"

"In a month I will certainly join you," answered the girl; "and if I might hope that in the meanwhile you would visit my parents, I would be both proud and grateful."

Mrs. Nevil being gone, Madame, turning to her companion, said, shrewdly,—

"In some way Madeline is at the bottom of your reluctance to go to Court Nevil. You can't deny it."

CHAPTER V.

So Maritana returned home to the joy of her people. Mrs. Ross was naturally delighted at the turn affairs had taken, but Mr. Ross shook his head, saying,—

"Wife, I never was in favour of unequal

marriages, and young Nevil may have forgotten our girl already; and again, I do not like to think that she will be set so far apart from us, as she must necessarily be if she enters this family."

"Why should I be separated from you?" asked Maritana from the open doorway, and as she advanced she added, with tender arms about his neck, "Do not you know, dear, that the only condition I have made with Mr. Nevil is that you shall be welcomed as an honoured guest? Oh! not even for the sake of Gilbert?" (how shyly she spoke his name) "will I forego your dear love. Father, mother, if I could be so base as to forget all your goodness, Heaven would punish me as I deserve. Do you remember certain words one of the sweetest women of the Bible spoke? Will you believe that I, from as full a heart as hers, now promise you faith in her very words? 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Where thou diest I will die, and there I will be buried;' " and then her voice so broke and faltered her, her eyes grew so soft through their unshed tears, that Mr. Ross bowing his head upon her pretty hair, said uncertainly,—

"There, child, let us say no more upon the subject. I am a foolish old man, with foolish, old-world prejudices, but I will never hurt you again by entertaining or hinting a doubt of your daughterly love."

A month later Madeline married and went abroad, and then the Nevils determined to go down to their future daughter. Mrs. Nevil was charmed with her parents. All her life she had been accustomed to regard the middle class as underbred and illiterate, consequently it was a pleasant surprise to her to discover in Mrs. Ross a refined and talented woman, whilst the husband's old-world courtesy had a very pleasant flavour. She grew quite enthusiastic in her praises of them, and her growing affection was evidently sincere.

It was really amusing to see how devoted Mr. Nevil was to Maritana, how ardently he strove to atone to her for all her sufferings in the past. In his delight at finding her so sweet he was ready to lavish any and every thing upon her; only Maritana had a quiet way of refusing gifts, being proud for all her gentleness. And seeing how deeply attached she was to her parents, he conceived the idea that if separated from them she would of necessity be unhappy, so he offered Mr. Ross the use of a pretty house on his estate. A flush rose to the ex-singer's face as he said,—

"You are very good, sir; but because your son may still wish to marry my daughter I see no reason why we should become your pensioners. We have enough for our wants. I am very grateful to you, but I have my pride. If you will allow me, I will rent the cottage that we may be near Maritana, for home is not home without her; but I will be an ordinary tenant, or remain where I am."

No arguments or persuasions could set aside his decision, and perhaps Mr. Nevil honoured him the more because of that sturdy spirit of independence. However that might be, he had to content himself with beautifying the pretty home which was to shelter Maritana until her marriage. It was not far removed from the Court, and daily visits were paid to the cottage.

Mrs. Nevil said with a sigh of relief,—

"I never can be sufficiently thankful that Maritana's parents are worthy of her. It would have been awful to find them uncultured and impossible people to know, because, my dear, I never could have found it in my heart to advise her to forget them."

"And if she had done so, Rowena, you would never have loved her. Well, for my part I am glad to have Ross up here. He's a shrewd man of business, and has helped me greatly since he came. I don't know a fellow I more respect or like; and good gracious! how glad I shall be to see our boy once more—our letter should have reached him by this

time. He will not delay his return long. Gilbert always knew his own mind and stuck to his resolves."

From place to place that letter had followed Gilbert, it concluded with the words, "Come home at once and marry whom you will. We cannot spare you longer."

As a matter of fact it never fell into his hands, his movements being as erratic, and the Nevils waited impatiently for some news concerning him, whilst Maritana's heart grew sick with hope so long deferred.

He came at length to Algiers, and there he met the Annesleys. He had heard nothing of their marriage, and was greatly surprised, but a little pleased too, because he knew Madeline had been intended for his wife, and now she herself had made such a union impossible, perhaps his father would be more amenable to his wishes. His face flashed hopefully, and his heart beat faster; he would go home, and, armed with his father's consent, he would have no difficulty in finding and winning Maritana. He hinted his purpose to Madeline.

It was gall and wormwood to her to think her rival should occupy the place she coveted; if only she could prevent a meeting for a few months longer, she might yet contrive to break off the intended match. She spoke to her husband on the subject, and he agreed that a white lie would be very permissible under the circumstances. He was honestly actuated by a belief that it was for Gilbert's good, and he credited Madeline with a like desire.

The three dined together that evening, and Gilbert after an embarrassed pause, asked Madeline if his people were still as averse to receiving Miss Ross as when he first broached the subject.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I think I may say they are; but surely, Gilbert, you have overcome that boyish fancy—believe me the girl was never worthy a thought from you. There, don't look so angry. I would not wound you without cause, but the truth is she is on the eve of marriage."

"What!" shouted Gilbert, springing to his feet, "It is a lie!"

"You forget yourself, Nevil," Annesley broke in quietly. "It is quite true Miss Ross is engaged to be married."

"Who told you this?" he demanded, hoarsely, and through all his bronze he paled visibly; it was to Madeline he spoke, and she answered glibly,—

"I had the story from uncle, he got it from Miss Ross herself—he chanced to meet her at some out-of-the-way place, and spoke with her. She was with a party of strolling actors, I believe, and seemed to have deteriorated greatly. Poor Gilbert, how sorry I am for your disappointment."

He did not seem to hear her, as, hastily rising, he went out into the soft dusk of the falling night; she glanced with a significant smile at Annesley.

"He feels it dreadfully now," she said, "but he is proud, and will soon live it down; one day, even if he learns the truth, which of course he must, he will be thankful to me for saving him despite himself."

"But really, Madeline, I hardly see how you are serving your purpose. You must enlighten me; for I confess I am all at sea. The Nevils are quite ready—more than ready to receive the girl; and if they learn the part you have played, they will refuse to know you."

"That will not hurt me now; and, after all, Forbes, I believe they have contested only through gratitude; then, too, I know Gilbert better than you do. He will not return to England whilst this blow is so new, it will cause him to extend his travels, and in the meanwhile what may not happen? At all events we have gained time, and he will return to his old friendship for you when once he is convinced of Maritana's falsehood."

Annesley flashed darkly; he would give so

much to feel he was in the least degree necessary to Gilbert; his love for him was very little less than that he bore his wife.

"If you succeed in restoring that to me," he said, "I shall not only be your lover, but your debtor all my life. Shall I go after Gilbert and bring him here?"

"No, leave him to brood over his supposed wrong; his anger will grow with every hour; we shall have no difficulty with him now."

And out in the night Gilbert was pacing to and fro with bent head and drooping eyes. This then was the girl he had loved, for whose sake he had been willing to renounce home and friends and fortune, for whose sake he had been a wanderer so long. She had sworn very deeply to love him while life should last—he laughed aloud then. She never had loved him, only his position and wealth. Ah, well, let her go! He was a man and would make no moan. It was better he should know her as she was now, before it was too too late. But it was cruel! What a triumph for his father—and oh! what a fool he had been!

With a muttered curse he returned to his room. There was now no reason to prolong his absence from home, his duty lay there, and it mattered little where he went now—she was false. He began to prepare for his journey—just this once Madeline's knowledge of his character was at fault, as she was presently to learn, to her great chagrin.

Long before she had risen the following morning he had gone, leaving a note behind for her, in which he said: "There is now no earthly reason why I should be an absentee from home, and I am anxious to find work of some kind! Forgive my seeming discourtesy in leaving thus, and when again we meet let there be no mention of the past between us."

She burst into tears of vexation.

"Who could have believed he would have acted thus? I always thought I knew him so well. Now he will go home and learn the truth, and that girl will be mistress of Court Nevil after all."

"And I am afraid, my dear, you may consider the doors closed against you. There is bound to be a scandal. Old Nevil won't spare you," said Annesley, who was more annoyed at the turn affairs had taken than he cared to confess; and, for the first time since his marriage, angry with his wife.

"Uncle Nevil may be angry with me, but he is too proud to publish anything to the discredit of the family," she retorted, "and I had your sanction to my little plot. You cannot deny that."

"I don't wish to do so; but it was a very clumsy plot after all. I wish I had had nothing to do with it. Of course the truth must have come out early or late, and it does not reflect credit upon either of us."

Gilbert was en route for England. Too proud a man to give voice to his calamity, he yet could not prevent some traces of suffering appearing in his stern face. There was a certain haggard look about the eyes, a certain compression of the firm mouth, which told the tale of a heavy burden borne with Spartan silence and courage.

He told himself he had put the past behind him, it was gone beyond recall, slain and buried; but he knew he lied, he knew that no other woman would ever be to him what Maritana had been, and that her treachery had darkened all his life.

When he reached England he halted at Southampton, from which place he wrote his parents:

"I have reached England. Shall I come on to Court Nevil? You need not fear that I shall outrage your feelings by bringing a bride with me. I have been once deceived by a woman, and the experience will last me a life time. I own that you were right and I wrong. I met the Annesleys at Algiers, and learned from them that Miss Ross was about to marry, so you see that affair is all ended. I have been a dreadful correspondent; but it was not

easy to write whilst we were at variance. And I suppose I have missed your letters. Write or telegraph what you wish me to do. I owe it to you to consider your wishes."

"Well," said Mr. Nevil as he dropped the letter, "the boy will be a trifle surprised when he learns the truth; but I wonder what motive Madeline had for deceiving him. I confess I cannot see."

"But I can—it is jealousy of Maritana. You see, my dear, even a Nevil may stoop to crooked ways; but of course your telegram will undeceive Gilbert."

"That it won't: he should not have been quite so ready to believe his cousin. And look here, Rowena, the Annesleys don't visit Court Nevil while I live. I disown Madeline from to-day. I shall not know her if we meet. And then he went off to despatch his message,—

"Come home without delay."

So Gilbert started for Court Nevil, telegraphing the time of his arrival, and his father met him at the little station with almost hilarious welcome.

"It is good to have you back again," he said as they bowed along; "but I cannot say your trip seems to have agreed very well with you. You are looking quite gaunt, and older than you should. Take my word for it, boy, there is no air like English air. I have not the least doubt you will be your old self in a week or two."

Gilbert hardly heard him, and presently he said, with a very visible effort,—

"Madeline told me of your meeting with her. I suppose it is true that she is soon to be married?"

"Quite true," answered Mr. Nevil, with a smile, which seemed to savour of triumph, "and I suppose it is true, too, that you have forgotten your little fancy?"

"I should be a happier man if I had," Gilbert said, bitterly. "Unfortunately I am not good at forgetting; and it is not the least of her offences against me that she caused the first breach between us."

"Ah, well, we have done with quarrels now, and you can marry whom you will. I have resolved not to oppose your wishes again. This parting, my boy, has been very hard for us to bear; but it has taught me how necessary you are to me."

"Thank you; and you need have no fear that I shall bring a wife home to dispute my mother's authority, I think I shall never marry."

"Nonsense!" laughed Mr. Nevil; Gilbert thought his mirth brutal; "you are young, and it is not likely you will grieve all your life over a woman's inconstancy. By the way, there is a *protégée* of your mother's staying with us who is my ideal daughter-in-law. Of course, I do not wish to force your inclinations, but I should be glad if you could see her with my eyes."

"There was only one woman in the world for me," doggedly, "I have lost her, and with her all my faith in her sex!"

"That is manifestly unfair; but you will not always hold such a poor opinion of them; and I am quite content to wait for the change to come. Well, here is home at last, and there is your mother waiting to welcome you. By the way, I forgot to tell you that the lady I spoke of saved her from drowning. Isn't your gratitude sufficient to make you her suitor?"

But Gilbert, with an angry exclamation, leapt to the ground and hastened to join Mrs. Nevil. And when he had been duly wept and rejoiced over, and the wants of his inner man generously supplied, Mr. Nevil said, with a mischievous glance, for which he could find no cause,—

"Go into the drawing room, my boy; you will find a new picture there which your mother and I agree is the prettiest in the house; but we would like to hear your opinion upon it."

"Oh, my opinion isn't worth much," Gilbert said, a trifle impatiently; but he rose, and went slowly towards the drawing-room,

wondering what on earth his father found to make merry over, for the sound of his laughter followed him.

In the centre of the room stood a young girl, who turned slowly as he entered, her face all wet with tears, all quivering with joy.

"Maritana!" he cried, and fell back a little from her.

"Yes, it is I," she answered, and put out her hand to him, but he held back, whilst he said,—

"I want to know what this means?"

"It means that your parents have learned to love me, and—and that Mrs. Annesley, for some reasons best known to herself, did not tell you the truth about me. I have never for a moment forgotten you or swerved in my loyalty."

"Maritana!" his voice was instinct now with passionate joy, "my love! my love! Then you are the heroic bride my parents have chosen for me?"

"If you still wish to lift me to your level—yes."

He caught her in his arms.

"If I wish to call you wife! Sweetest and dearest, can you doubt it?"

"Well," said Mr. Nevil, an hour later, looking into the room, "does the picture please you?"

"Father!" and the young man's hand went out to meet the elder's.

"Well, well," laughed Mr. Nevil, to cover his emotion, "look after her carefully, because, as I told you from the first, she is a very designing young woman. Is it not so, Maritana?"

"I fear you too much to contradict you," she retorted, with a happy laugh.

The Nevils and Annesleys do not speak as they pass, but the world does not know the cause of their estrangement.

[THE END]

DR. FARR'S BRIDE

—O—

"There's another room gone," said Molly.

"Eh?" said Mrs. Clarke.

"Why, the ceiling came down plump in the back room last night," explained Molly, standing in the doorway, with the mop in one hand and a pail of water in the other. "Looks exactly as if there'd been an avalanche of lime dust there. It was the rain I suppose did it. I've known that roof was leaky this good while. And it's my duty to tell you, ma'am, the back staircase isn't safe to use any longer. There's one step gone and the bannisters loose. And cook says she's that nervous she can't stay in the house, with the loose bricks tumbling down the kitchen chimney every time the wind blows a bit."

Mrs. Clarke sighed. She was a handsome, high-featured woman, with dark eyes and a shabby genteel dressing-gown worn at the elbows.

"Never mind, Molly," said she. "It'll all be right, once Miss Nellie is married. Dr. Farr is a man of wealth. He will rebuild the old house for us."

"Well," muttered Molly, "it's a good thing the wedding's coming soon, or there wouldn't be a house left to rebuild."

At the same moment a pretty young gipsy of sixteen was rushing frantically into one of the great, sparsely-furnished bedrooms with a pasteboard box in her hand.

Overhead plump little plaster Cupids swung garlands of flowers from the cracked and discoloured cornices. A faded rug supplied the place of carpet, and the merry sunshine played hide-and-seek with the worn places in the yellow damask curtains, and a beautiful young girl sat at a rheumatic writing desk, with her chin supported in her hands and her sea-blue eyes fixed dreamily on space.

"Nellie, here's another box come!" screamed the younger sister, breathless with rapture. It must be the veil! Do open it and look. Do, Nellie, please. Oh, I never saw a wedding veil before in all my life, and I do so want to see what it is like!"

Nellie Clarke looked up.

"You can open it," said she, without a change of posture.

"Well, I declare!" said Amy. "Anyone would think I was the bride. Well, here goes! Oh, oh! isn't it beautiful?"

Nellie leaned forward a little and scrutinised the delicate folds of lace more closely.

"Yes," she said, indifferently, "it's pretty enough. But it's the wrong pattern; it doesn't match the flounces and the jabot."

"It must go back at once!" cried Amy.

"Only three days now, and the wrong pattern of lace! What are people thinking of?"

"Oh, let it stay!" listlessly uttered Nellie.

"What difference does it make whether it's one pattern or another?"

"What difference?" Amy looked hard at her sister. "Oh, Nellie! I'm so sorry Cousin Dick is coming to the wedding."

Nellie Clarke coloured an intense scarlet.

"Sorry that our own cousin is to be here on the occasion of my marriage?"

"N—no," hesitated Amy, "not that. But it sets you to thinking of him. Is he so very handsome, Nell?"

Is he handsomer than Dr. Farr? You're such a funny girl, or you would have photographs of both of them. But there comes the pony, and I must make haste, or I shall lose the down train, for the veil!"

Ned, the errand boy, was promptly deposed from his place in the battered little village cart, and Miss Amy jumped in, took the box in her lap, and whipping the pony briskly up, drove away as fast as she could.

"Just in time!" she cried. "And now I may as well wait for the up train. There may be some one that I know on it."

"I beg your pardon," said a pleasant, deep-toned voice, "but can you tell me the way to Daisy Dean?"

Amy turned, and saw a handsome man, with a light valise in his hand.

"To Daisy Dean?" she repeated. "Why, I am Amy Clarke, and I'm going straight there. I think—you must be—Dick!"

"That is my name," he answered, brightly. "And you are little Amy, of course."

She looked gravely at him. He could almost read the sudden changes of thought in her blue, solemn eyes and varying colour.

"Please get into the cart!" said she. "I suppose I must take you to the Dean, as there's no cab or bus here. But, touching the phlegmatic pony with her whip lash, 'I'm almost sorry you've come!'"

"Sorry? Why, little Amy? And I thought we were to be such friends!" he cried.

"I think perhaps I'd better tell you all about it," said she, speaking as if she had not heard his words. "No one knows it all but me and Nellie. Nellie won't be pleased, but, but—Oh, Dick, hadn't you better go away without seeing her?"

"Go away without seeing her! And why?"

"Oh," faltered Amy, letting the reins drop, "she's so unhappy! She's going to be married to a very rich man—Dr. Farr, from London. We are so poor, you know, and all that money that papa invested in the Union Bank is gone, and Daisy Dean is all falling to ruin; and mamma's cried three days and three nights, and so Nellie said 'Yes.' But oh, she is so miserable! And if you come back Dick, the old love will burn up again in her heart; for she does love you, Dick—she told me so. She has loved you ever since that time you exchanged rings at Worthing; and she has got the little blue ring still. And she hates the very idea of marrying Dr. Farr—only—only—mamma has made her feel that it was her duty. Oh, don't look so stern and white at me, Dick—dear Dick! It's a dreadful thing to have to tell you, but I think you ought to know. Please—please don't ever let mamma or Nellie know that I said this to

you! But if you could make them believe you were engaged to somebody else," said Amy, with a sudden flush of hope dyeing her cheek, "then I think Nellie might learn to be happy with the London man."

"Engaged to somebody else, eh?" said this unknown confidant. "But to whom? To yourself, for example?"

"Yes. Why not?" said Amy, with the utmost gravity. "Merely as a business matter, you know. We'll call it me—only you must go away, Dick, and not see her again."

"Stop the horse," he said, quietly. "Wait until I can lift my valise out, and good bye, my little fiancée!"

"You are really going?" rapturously exclaimed Amy, clapping her small, gannetted hands. "Oh, Dick, how good of you—how noble! I almost do think I love you now. And remember, this is for Nellie's sake."

"For Nellie's sake!" repeated her companion, and he smiled and nodded. "I shall reach the station by this cross-cut through the woods," he said, "in time for the next down-train, and—"

The close of the sentence was lost in the clatter of a wagon that just then jolted along, inciting the Dean pony to mad emulation, and, before Amy could check his enthusiasm, she was nearly at the tumble-down gates of the old mansion itself.

Nellie herself was in the tangled rose garden, gathering white and cream coloured and royal red roses—Nellie more flushed and lovely than any princess; and beside her, under the full radiance of the June sunshine, strolled a tall, handsome young man, carrying the basket and the scissors.

"Amy, come here," cried Nellie, springing brightly forward. "Here's your cousin Dick!"

The girl stared blankly at him over the wheel of the village cart.

"No," said she, "he's an imposter. He's not my cousin. The real Cousin Dick rode half way up with me and jumped off at Cress-trees."

"But, nevertheless," said the Spanish-faced young fellow, mildly, "I am Dick Brown, and I am your cousin. Ask Nellie, here, if it isn't so!"

He looked down into Nellie's blue, sparkling eyes; he drew her slim, white hand under his arm, with a sort of tender proprietorship that startled poor Amy.

"If you are Cousin Dick," said she, slowly, "who was the handsome man with the grey suit and the dark blue eyes, and the little scar over his left eyebrow?"

"Is the child dreaming?" said Nellie, with a sweet burst of laughter. "She talks as if she had seen Dr. Farr himself."

Amy never stopped to greet this handsome, unwelcome kinsman of hers; she rushed frantically to her own room, and burying her face in the pillows of her bed, burst into tears.

"Oh, what have I done? And all for no use!"

The next day there came a letter to Nellie Clarke.

She frowned a little as she recognised the handwriting of her affianced husband—then she broke it open and read its contents.

"Dick," she murmured to the young man who lounged in the cushioned window seat.

"Well, my queen?"

"It isn't necessary for us to elope now. I—almost believe I love Richard Farr after all. A man that can be as chivalrous as that—"

She laughed, and then burst out sobbing as she flung the letter to Cousin Dick.

"Oh, he is so good—so good!" she faltered. "He gives me back my troth. But mamma is to have the money just the same to rebuild Daisy Dean with, and there is two hundred a-year for me, as long as I live. Oh, Dick, I don't deserve it. I won't take it."

"Yes, you will," said business-like Dick, "you'll take all you can get. We can't live

on air, you know, darling, and my income is rather slim as yet. He's a good old snuffer—"

"Old?" half angrily interrupted Nellie. "No older than yourself! But what does this mean—about the ring? He says I am to give it to Amy for herself. She will know what it means! Well, if this isn't the strangest riddle!"

Amy looked defiantly at her sister when the message was delivered to her.

"But I won't take the ring," said she, half hysterically, resisting Nellie's efforts to slip the superb diamond solitaire on her finger.

"You must!" said her sister. "Dick's turquoise is a deal more precious to me than this great gem. The wedding is to come off just the same, but Dick is to be the groom. Oh, what are diamonds to me? I am so very very happy!"

"And this is all you care for Dr. Farr's noble generosity!" said Amy, with scarlet cheeks and quick-coming breath. "No, I won't wear the ring. I'll keep it, and—and sometimes look at it. Oh, what a fool I was! And why did I say all those things? There's only one thing that remains to me—I must go to work and learn to be a great painter as soon as possible, so that I can pay back the money which mamma and Nellie are using so mercifully."

It was just a year afterward, and Amy Clarke was sitting on the ruined stone terrace, feeding her pet peacock with corn.

Her open sketch-book lay beside her, the sweet summer wind was rustling her curls, when the bird uttered a discordant screech and flew away, startled by the presence of a stranger.

Amy sprang up.

"Dr. Farr!" she exclaimed.

"Call me 'Dick,' as you did that first day," said he. "Little Amy, you don't know what you saved me from when you mistook me for the cousin whom you had never seen. Don't shrink away so, Amy. Have you forgotten that you are engaged to me?"

Through all the previous year Amy had been rehearsing this scene to herself. She had planned the exact phraseology in which she would express her appreciation, her indifference, her polite *sang froid*. He should never know that she liked him. She would let him see that she regarded the whole thing as a joke, and yet, now that the time had come, she was struck dumb, and sat, blushing and silent, like any schoolgirl.

"Amy," he said, gently, "don't shrink away from me. A year ago I believed that life had no more charm for me; but thinking of those eyes of yours, I have come to a different conclusion. Dearest, you engaged yourself to me as a mere matter of form. Will you do it again—this time in real earnest?"

And the end of Amy's carefully-studied speeches was,—

"Yes."

So there was a Mrs Farr in the Clarke family, after all, and when Nellie Brown, in a shabby pension at Lucerne, read the marriage notice, she exclaimed, scornfully,—

"Well, I never thought that Amy would take up with a second-hand sweetheart!"

Mr. Brown made no reply; he was gloomily surveying a pile of unrecipited bills.

"Do you hear, Dick?" sharply spoke his wife. "Amy is married. And to my old beau!"

"Yes, I hear," said he, abstractedly.

"Well, why don't you say something?"

"I've only one thing to say," snarled the Spanish-faced hero. "That any idiot who gets married does a very stupid thing. Five hundred francs milliner's bill, a hundred francs board. Good heavens! what is going to become of us?"

"I thought you loved me, Dick," whispered Nellie. "I'm sure Dr. Farr did."

"Then," said Brown, deliberately, "I wish you had married him."

FACETIE.

THE size of a man has nothing to do with the size of the lie he can tell.

WHAT is done cannot be undone, especially if it is a hard-boiled egg.

MODERN SOCIETY overlooks a soiled reputation much more readily than it does soiled gloves.

THE telephone is an arrangement by which two men can lie to each other without becoming confused.

"CAN't you give a poor baggar a copper?" "Certainly. Willie, run and call a policeman for this gentleman."

"Bridget is engaged to the postman," said Mrs. Smith. "But it can't last. Bridget breaks everything she goes near."

LET married people take a lesson from their shoes. If they wear exactly alike they wouldn't make a well-fitting pair.

A MAN never knows what he can do until he tries, and then he is often sorry that he found out.

"You are the world to me," he whispered. "All right," she answered. "You can be the sun. I'm going to marry your father."

MRS. FERG: "Where is that constable I put away this noon?" Tommy: "I—I guessed it vanished into the empty air."

PROFESSOR: "What does 'Plato's Apology' apologize for?" Student (at random): "Well—er—for being written in Greek."

HUSBAND: "Didn't you promise to obey me at the altar?" Wife: "Yes, but we're not there now."

MRS. WITHERBY: "What did your cook do? Go off in a huff?" Mrs. Plunkington: "No. She went off in my tailor made gown."

No matter how calm a man may be, he always becomes nervous when, after changing his money from one pocket to another, he dives his hand into the pocket which is empty.

WE have noticed that when you tell a woman her daughter is just the image of her when she was that age, the mother looks pleased and the daughter looks scared.

SUSIE (at her music lesson): "I'd like to catch an old air I heard in the reception-room last night." Professor: "What is that air, Miss Susie?" Susie: "A millionaire."

A SERVANT girl in need of employment was a little perplexed when she read this advertisement in a daily paper: "Wanted, a young woman to wash, iron and milk one or two cows."

PRISONER: "It's the first time I have ever been before your worship." Judge: "Well, then, take my advice; you'll never come before me any more if you wish to avoid bad company."

IT is rather unpleasant to hear a public speaker remark: "My friends—ur, I wish to say a few words—ur, on this occasion—ur." But then it should be remembered that to ur is human.

A LEAF YEAR PROPOSAL—"Miss Rox made a proposal to me last night." "Ha! you're in luck." "She proposed that I spend my evenings elsewhere, as she expected soon to become engaged."

"STEWART!" cried the miserable passenger. "Yes, sir. Anything I can bring you, sir?" "Nothing, steward, but an acre of real estate—anything—hang the neighbourhood, as long as it's good, solid ground."

MISS DE THUMP: "What shall I play?" Hostess: "Play your favourite." Miss De Thump: "Every piece I know is a favourite." Hostess: "Then—er—play something else."

AN Irishman, who was very near-sighted, about to fight a duel, insisted that he should stand six paces nearer to his antagonist than the other did to him, and they were both to fire at the same moment.

SOCIETY.

It is now the style with the best class of Hindoo women to discard the nose ring, and wear a flower there instead.

It is stated by an eminent French genealogist that the Comte de Paris is a direct descendant of the infamous Lucresia Borgia.

WOMEN in Burmah propose to men whom they seek in marriage, and when they tire of them a divorce can be had for the asking.

The first Italian lady who sang in public in England was Francesco Margherita de l'Epina, who appeared in various operas in 1693.

A PRETTY fancy is for bridesmaids to walk up the church aisle in diamond procession, first one bridesmaid, then two, and a fourth alone, followed by the bride with her father.

In Paris, which is all France, one must never betray any admiration of any effects evolved during the dinner, gastronomic or decorative, much less speak of them.

The King and Queen of Denmark are staying at the Castle of Bernstorff, six miles from Copenhagen, where the Princess of Wales and her daughters and the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland are their guests, while the Russian Imperial Family occupy a villa in the grounds.

The health of the Queen of Roumania is still very feeble, and she is much depressed. She spent Whit Sunday with her mother-in-law, the Dowager Princess of Hohenzollern; but the slowness of her recovery and her apparent inability to regain her normal strength occasion considerable anxiety.

A SOCIETY has been formed in Warsaw for the encouragement of good servants. A prize is given to any servant who can produce testimonials showing that she has performed her duties to the satisfaction of her employer for a period of two years.

The little Crown Prince of Germany has received another Order, that of the Netherlands Lion, which the Queen Regent of Holland has just sent him. It was very pretty to see the young Queen of Holland, during her visit to Berlin, playing with the Emperor's healthy boys in the Park of the New Palace at Potsdam.

The genius of the French shoemaker seems to be largely directed to the fashioning of novel and pretty low shoes, ties, slippers, and sandals to accompany dancing toilets. The "Princess May shoe" is perfection in its shape, and has no fancy touches. It is of black French kid of the finest, most flexible quality. It is lined with mauve silk, slashed a little on top, and tied with a plain black satin ribbon.

PLAIN India muslins are reappearing, with embroidered borders in coloured floral patterns, exquisitely fresh and dainty. These and the quaint old dresses sacred from the starch fiend's desecrating touch, soft and clinging, and sprayed with flowers or powdered with dots of colour, are made over the lightest of tulle silks and in simplest styles. Lace is the favourite decoration for these thin materials, which will be so delightful for warm summer wear.

WHILE the Queen Regent of Holland was being publicly received and cavalcaded in Berlin by the Emperor William, little Queen Wilhelmina remained at the Palace, where she "received" thirty children of the aristocracy. The whole, forgetting the high rank of their hostess, had a good romp together. The young Queen, though not a beauty, is a graceful child, who has been so far simply and well educated, without having her head crammed with knowledge; she is already a good whip, and can row a small boat well.

RUSSIAN ladies suffer terribly from nervous attacks. This is mainly due to the overheated rooms in which they live, the cigarettes which they continually smoke, the sweets which they eat, and above all, the tea which they drink.

STATISTICS.

THE potato was carried from Virginia to Ireland in 1610, by Sir Walter Raleigh.

IN Eastern New Mexico 600,000 acres of arid ground have been turned into farms through irrigation.

THE aggregate mileage of railroads on earth would reach to the moon and a half way back.

IN the Encyclopædia Britannica there are said to be 10,000 words that have never been formally entered and defined in any dictionary.

IT was recently stated by Professor Kirchhoff that Chinese is the most popular language in the world. It is spoken by four hundred million persons. Hindoostani is spoken by upwards of one hundred million; English by more than one hundred million; Russian by more than seventy million; German by fifty-eight million; Spanish by forty-five million; and French by only forty million.

GEMS.

GENIUS does what it must; talent what it can.

A "PERFECT stranger" is met with at nearly every turn of life, but a perfect friend is a rarity.

TO-DAY is a king in disguise. To-day always looks mean to the thoughtless, in the face of a uniform experience that all good and great and happy actions are made up precisely of these blank to-days. Let us not be so deceived, let us unmask the king as he passes.

EVERY honest heart, every thinking mind, has its value in the community to which it belongs. Our value, such as it is, remains wanting to our community, and, when its crises of trial shall come, we shall not have been trained by watchful experience to understand either their cause or their remedy.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

WHEN baking cakes set a dish of water in the oven with them, and they will not be in much danger from scorching.

TO SAN RHUBARB.—Fill the cans with rhubarb cut in small pieces, then fill up full with cold water and seal up tight, set away in a dark, cool cellar, and it will keep indefinitely.

GINGER BEER.—To two gallons of water add two ounces of bruised ginger and two pounds of sugar. Boil half an hour, skim, and pour into a jar or tub with sliced lemon and half ounce cream of tartar. When nearly cold add a cupful of yeast. Let it work for two days, then strain, bottle, and cork.

BREAD.—Two and a half pounds of flour, one ounce of German yeast, one and a half breakfast cups of water, one teaspoonful of salt, and one teaspoonful of sugar. Put two pounds of the flour into a basin, and mix the salt with it. Make the water lukewarm or tepid, and with it gradually dissolve the yeast; then pour it in among the flour, and knead it up into a soft dough. Sprinkle a handful of the remaining flour over it, and cover with a plate and a cloth, and set the basin in a warm place to rise for one hour. Then use the remainder of the flour to knead the dough. Form it into loaves; set the loaves again to rise a quarter of an hour, then put them in the oven till ready, which depends on their size. A larger quantity of flour may be made into bread with the same quantity of yeast, but it must rise a longer time. More water must be used when necessary. Bread made in the same way with home-made yeast—one tea-cup equal to one ounce of German.

MISCELLANEOUS.

If a well could be dug to the depth of forty-six miles, the density of the air at the bottom would be as great as that of quicksilver.

SEVERAL years ago there was a law in Poland which compelled every stamander to walk on all fours through the streets of the town.

A PAIR of gloves passes through about 200 hands from the moment that the skin leaves the dressers until the gloves are purchased by the intending wearer.

THE *Pekin Gazette* has been in existence a thousand years, and 17 of its editors have been beheaded. The paper is a more flourishing condition now than ever it was.

REPORT comes from London of the discovery of the thistle as an article of food for man as well as beast. When boiled it is not unlike delicate turnip tops.

DENMARK will exhibit, at the World's Fair, a complete Danish dairy, and Norway a counterpart of a Viking ship which was exhumed near Sandeford, a few years since.

THE colours of Great Britain are red and blue; of the United States, stars on the blue with white and red stripes. The Austrian colours are red, white, and blue; the Bavarian, red; those of Denmark, red with a white cross; those of France, blue, white, and red.

So great has been the advance in recent years in the making of gelatine dry-plates that an instantaneous photograph was a short time ago taken of an express train when running at 60 miles an hour; the print showing distinctly, and without blur, the locomotive and five carriages.

THEY have evidently a "short way" with bloyolists in the dominions of the Sultan. That despotic and not-to-be-trifled-with monarch is said to have forbidden all cycling in and near his capital, on the ground that the pastime is "immoral and dangerous to the State."

SNAIL'S eggs absorb moisture. The most singular thing about them, however, is their marvellous vitality. They may be burnt in a furnace and thus reduced to powder, yet on the application of moisture they swell and regain their vitality, hatching out as freely and successfully as if they had been left alone.

THE first coining of money is attributed to Pheidon, king of Argos, in 895 B.C. Coined money was first used in this country twenty-five years before the Christian era, but gold was not coined here till the eleventh century, and money was not given the round form, to which we are accustomed, until the lapse of another hundred years or so.

IN the dining rooms of some of the large *cafés* in Russia there is a pool of fresh water in which fish of various kinds and sizes swim about. Any patron of the restaurant who may wish a course of fish for dinner goes to the pool, picks out the particular one he may desire, and in a moment the waiter has captured it with a dip net and sent it to the chef.

CAT farms or nurseries are not unknown in this country, but from Germany there comes a report of a boarding establishment for birds while their owners are holiday-making. The songsters are cared for and dined, &c., at an inclusive rate, which is a shilling per week for canaries, two shillings for parrots and like birds, and somewhat more for finches, nightingales, &c. As an additional inducement it is said that the companionship of birds tends to improve their song.

THE new sovereign, designed by Mr. Brock, is to be issued in a few weeks' time. Mr. Brock has retained St. George and the Dragon on the reverse, but he has introduced a little realism into the design by dismounting the Saint, removing his horse, and arming him with a more business-like weapon than he has hitherto been allowed. If the new design has not the advantage of the old in point of artistic merit, it has in the matter of common sense.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

GRACE VICKERMAN.—You can do nothing without the consent of your parents, as you are under age.

T. B.—The sturgeon is described as the "Royal," not the whale.

OSCAR.—The present King William of Wurtemberg, ascended the throne October 16, 1891.

JOE.—All cyclists are required by law to carry a lamp burning between certain hours, in town or country.

UNCERTAINTY.—It is hard to say where the "suburbs" of London end, but it would be unfair to say they stretch to Hydenham.

PHILANTHROPY.—Write to the lady superintendent of the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital and Convalescent Home, Ely.

GABRIELIN.—A wedding-ring does not necessarily form any part of the marriage formality at the office of the registrar.

T. N. B.—The 1st Royal Scots, being the oldest infantry regiment in the British army, have the largest number of "honours."

TROUBLED MOTHER.—To buy off a soldier in India, if he has under three months' service, you require to send £18 and pay his passage home.

GLADYS.—Next to the Prince of Wales, his eldest surviving son, now Prince George of Wales, would succeed to the Crown.

A. V.—The title of Duke of Clarence and Avondale was conferred on the late Prince Albert Victor on June 21, 1890.

ANX.—Businesses that pay well do so because they are well managed; it is not because a special article is traded in that success attends it.

APPRECIATIVE READER.—The Army Estimates for 1891-92 provided for 707,242 men of all ranks, including the Indian establishment.

DOLORES.—One good black dress will serve a greater variety of useful purposes than anything in colours or fashions.

T. D.—The claim of the lord of the manor depends upon the "custom" at the manor; what that is in the case quoted we do not know.

MILKMAN.—There is nothing to prevent your selling "skimmed" milk, or "seconds," provided you make each customer understand what it is he is buying.

SUFFERING POLLY.—We should not consider medical advice given in a newspaper to be of any value, and could not name any paper to which you should or could apply.

TROUBLE.—Your daughter's piano cannot be taken for your debt, but it is desirable she should be able to prove it hers by receipt, or calling witnesses who can swear to it.

A LOVING HEART.—The bandmen of a regimental band draw a fixed pay per day; but they also, we believe, share in the proceeds of the fees charged for private engagements.

INQUISITIVE.—Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein is said to be very like what the Queen was at her age, save that her hair is fairer and that she is somewhat taller than her Majesty.

ADELAIDE.—There is not at present a British-owned vessel named *Adelaide* of larger size than a schooner, but there are at least half-a-dozen barques and ships of the name flying foreign flags afloat.

PERPLEXED FRANK.—There is no handy way of getting at such a list; if you had said steamers, these could have been stated from memory, but ships must be searched for in lists of thousands.

IN DEBT.—If a promissory note runs, "I promise to pay," and is signed by two or more persons, it is deemed to be their joint and several note; each and all being liable for its performance.

U. S.—The man becomes a British subject again, and amenable to British law the moment he returns to his native country; anywhere else he will claim U.S. protection, but here that does not avail him.

IN DIFFICULTIES.—Unless under order of a competent tribunal, the father is entitled to the guardianship of his children. The wife especially apply where the wife refused to live with her husband.

NAD.—Druggists' show bottles are now made of coloured glass, and filled with pure water. They are considered just as effective as the white glass filled with coloured water, and certainly involve less trouble.

ARCHIE.—They are valuable only as curiosities now; we do not think anyone would be likely to buy them, except for exhibition in a museum; put a short advertisement in a morning paper and see what offers you get.

SIMON.—If a master has failed to properly instruct an apprentice, as agreed in the indentures, application may be made to the magistrates to cancel the indentures, or to order repayment of part of any premium paid, or both.

PERRIN.—Marshal B. S. ine, the French general, withdrew his forces from Mexico in February, 1897. He declared Maximilian's position to be untenable. He married a rich Mexican lady, whose family sided with Juarez. He was generally believed to be engaged in secret plotting, with the enemies of Maximilian for his own personal ends.

LUCILLE.—The right spelling is Daphne, the name of a heathen divinity; there is no such word as Daphne, but the Dauphine was the title of the heir-apparent to the French throne in the days of the Monarchy, as the Infanta is now the heir-apparent to the Spanish throne.

PADDY.—To obtain the libretto and score of the cantata, write to any large music-publishing house. The publishers to whom you write either have the cantata in their catalogue or can inform you where you can obtain it.

EMIGRATION.—Yes; he would, or in Queensland; or in Western Australia; but as regards climate, New Zealand is greatly preferable to either; write to Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, E.W., for latest information regarding trade in that colony.

DOLORES.—In walking arm-in-arm with a lady a gentleman gives her his left arm—the arm nearest the heart, some say. As a matter of fact it is to leave his right arm free for any other action that may be necessary, and to give her the opportunity to hold with the arm in which she has most power—her right.

A. B. C.—California, undoubtedly, but the fare is heavy, running into £20, with one thing and another; you might, therefore, have to begin at New York and work your way across the Continent to the Pacific slope; that could be best done in spring; there is practically perpetual summer in California, but a good deal of extremely rigid winter on the way to it.

FASTIDIOUS.—The dearest perfume for one's wardrobe and bureau drawers, and the one that is least likely to pall, or, worse yet, grow oppressive, is lavender. Big, comfortable, fat-looking bags of this clean, sweet perfume can be bought at any druggist's for very little; and half-a-dozen scattered among your belongings, will make them dainty and sweet.

FORGIVE.

Is it farewell? I murmur not.

Mine was the fault, he mines the least!

You tried my love, and the fires hot

Revealed not gold, but dross.

I bear my punishment, but yet

I cry "Forgive me, and forget."

I hear my woe in silence, sure

If love's true way I have not learned,

I know how to endure.

The heart that thou has spurned,

Will not b-wail its fate—but yet

I cry, "Forgive me, and forget!"

Forgive me, dear! 'Tis all I ask;

Forgetting easily will come.

But pardon is a heavier task.

Though love's sweet lips be dumb,

And pity's eyes with tears are wet—

With tears that plead for love—forget.

Let me not pass beyond thy sight

With soul of all its sins not shriven,

To wander in an exile's night,

Forgot but not forgiven.

So ere thy sentence I be set,

Forgive me, dear, and then forget.

A. J. D.

GROVER.—South Africa is a healthy colony, but it would be folly on the part of a grocer to go out there in the hope of finding a situation, except he has introductions to friends who can assist him along until he is satisfactorily placed; besides, it will cost him £20, one way and another, to reach the locality; that is a lot of money to throw away on a chance.

COUNTRYMAN.—The Prime Minister, as such, does not receive any salary. The present Prime Minister is Foreign Secretary, for which he receives £5,000 a year. The pay of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is £5,000, and of the Lord Chancellor £10,000. You will find all the salaries of Ministers and other high officials in "Whitaker's Almanack."

UNOBSERVANT.—A gentleman must not lift his hat to a lady until she either bows or recognises him; but when she does so, and he salutes, her escort, if she has one, must salute in return by also raising his hat, even though he should not know the gentleman; similarly, if the gentleman is accompanied by a male friend he also is bound to raise his hat to the lady, though he does not know her.

IN DISPUTE.—The Duke of Cambridge was at the battle of Alma, and after the Russians had been routed by the advance of the Highland Brigade, rode up to Sir Colin Campbell with the historically-famous salutation, "You are a brick, Sir Colin." In fact, the Duke led one of the divisions into action at Alma; at Inkerman again he was most actively engaged, and had a horse shot under him.

W. L.—What has been stated to you is not the fact; some four or five years ago, during the campaign in Egypt, a general invitation was given to volunteer battalions to offer for service abroad; the invitation was not responded to, however, but some twenty members of the Post Office Rifles in London volunteered for field service in Egypt as telegraphers, and their situations were kept open for them.

FOLLY.—There is no real cure for the enlarged joints you have created by wearing hard, tight boots; but if you wear soft boots now, shaped so as to give free, natural play to the feet, the latter will gradually resume much of the shape they have lost; wearing a pad of lint soaked in olive oil upon the joint, covered with a bit of oiled silk, for a few days, will tend to soften any "hardness" on the joint.

A WARRIOR BOLD.—If your captain has really been doing what you represent you will be able to recover all overcharges he has made when he returns to the home port. Charging more for the ropes than the current rate of exchange—that is, the actual value in the country at the time you got your advances—is quite illegal. The signing of the bill will not protect the captain.

CLERMONTINA.—Substantially the difference between a rector and a vicar is that the former has the whole tithes of the parish, while the latter has only a portion of them, usually what are called "the small tithes." By an Act of Parliament passed some years ago, however, incumbents of district churches (having nothing to do with tithes) were authorised to assume the description of vicar.

T. T.—We do not see how you can be anxious to have the situation if you do not know anything about it; the way to get full and definite information is to write Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon Row, asking him to be good enough to send you form showing subjects of the examination set to candidates for the situation, also when next examination will take place; he will reply at once; no charge.

TEDDY.—You are too old for admission to the navy as an apprentice man-of-war's man (though that is not the name really given to entrants), and not old enough to go as a stoker; besides, you could be accepted in the latter capacity only on proving you had had experience of the work; you will either have to qualify by acting as fireman on land for a while, or just go to sea as an ordinary seaman in a commercial ship.

B. S. F.—Your testimonials would be in your favour, and Pennsylvania is a good State to go to; but you are late; in the States, as here, work begins to slacken the railways in autumn, and is dull in winter; your preparations for departure are complete; you will be on, and you will arrive when employes are beginning to be discharged; we think you should write to your friends before going out, and go upon their advice.

LINGUIST.—There is not the very close similarity you suggest of Latin and Gaelic languages, but for such similarity as actually exists the common origin in the Aryan, or Indo-European, parent language is responsible; "the chief members of this family are the Teutonic, Slavonic (Polish, Russian, Bohemian), Lithuanian, Celtic (Highland, Welsh, Irish, &c.), Latin, Greek, Armenian, Persian, and Sanskrit," similarities such as you speak of can be traced in all these.

ROSEBUD.—The festival of roses is an annual celebration in some of the rural parts of France. It consists in crowning the best-behaved maiden of the town or village. The ceremony takes place in a church, whither she is conducted with great pomp by the villagers. Festivals of this description are usually celebrated in France on the 8th of June. The Parisians have also an annual festival of roses, which consists of bands of youths parading the streets with music, and offering roses to all they meet, for which they receive a trifling gratuity.

T. D. G.—At two years of age a dog's habits are well formed, and it is difficult to alter them in any way; a collie, however, is gifted with a larger amount of intelligence than most dogs, and by promptly and persistently correcting him, the moment he shows a disposition to indulge any vicious propensity he may in a short time be quite cured of his fault; give him one or two smart cuts with a light cane when he offends; then keep the cane hanging near the door where he can see it and be reminded of the punishment that follows upon his misconduct, but do not omit to punish him when he forgets himself, nor to give him a word of praise when he behaves as he should do; in that way you may expect to get him to understand what you wish to be at; but meanwhile you will take care that he is not tormented in any way by passing children.

TOM.—Any dealer in, or any catalogue of, gymnastic appliances will show you a small and inexpensive arrangement of pulleys and weights, which may be attached to a door-casing or partition, anywhere where heavy screws may be put into strong wood. Circulars describing the use of the machine are furnished with it. This will assist you to develop and strengthen your shoulders. A great deal of benefit may be derived simply from swinging the arms and taking long, deep breaths. There is much debate as to the proper or most healthful position during sleep. Much depends upon the individual, and certain physical conditions would decide if the head be high or low. As a rule, physicians and hygienists of the old school insist that the best position is flat upon the back without a pillow. This, however, would not answer at all for persons with certain cerebral troubles. So you see that there is no arbitrary rule.

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